



Posted Dec. 10, 1999

De Pere school survey shows support for renovation

Eventually, information gathered from questionnaire will be used to create another referendum

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - A mail-in survey of residents in the De Pere School District indicates there may be more support to spend taxpayer money to renovate existing buildings rather than build new ones.

The survey was mailed to 6,624 households in the district. Terri Matousek of Matousek & Associates, Green Bay, the firm that compiled and analyzed the survey results, estimated that 1,050 households responded for an overall response rate of 16 percent.

"That's a good response rate for a mailer," Matousek said. "Responses to mailed surveys generally run in the 10 percent to 25 percent range."

Of the survey respondents, 608 have children in De Pere public or private schools, while 539 respondents do not have school age children.

According to the findings, almost half the respondents believe the current facilities at all grade levels are adequate now but will be outgrown in the future.

Forty-four percent of the respondents believe that current elementary schools will be outgrown, 48 percent think the middle school will be outgrown, and 47 percent say the high school will be outgrown.

"There's good strong support for expanding existing facilities rather than building new ones," Matousek said.

Sixty-six percent of respondents indicated they are in favor of adding on to the current middle school and high school.

At the elementary school level, 43 percent responded in favor of adding on to Heritage and Dickinson Elementary schools, while 31 percent want a new school.

Regarding the old middle school on Broadway, which is vacant, 73 percent are in favor of renovating it to be used as a school.

The next step for the School Board is to start developing a new plan, Superintendent Richard Yenchesky

said.

"The survey was very helpful," Yenchesky said.

"The research is done we've got a feel for public sentiment, we know our needs."

The information gathered from the survey eventually will be used to craft a new referendum more acceptable to taxpayers than the one rejected in May, the district says.

"It was a good plan but not what the public wanted at that time," Yenchesky said of the failed referendum.

"Sometimes you have to back up to find out what the public wants. I'm very reassured by the community's response" to the survey, he said.

In May, voters rejected a \$20 million referendum to build a school and renovate Dickinson Elementary School and the old middle school.



Posted Dec. 16, 1999

De Pere board considers school options

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Targeting a Tuesday, April 4, referendum for facilities improvements, the De Pere School Board discussed two options Wednesday that could be presented at a public forum on Tuesday, Jan. 18.

The forum's location has not been determined, although it will likely start at 6:30 p.m.

One option calls for the high school, which has a 900 student capacity, to be expanded to accommodate about 250 more students in grades nine through 12. De Pere Middle School would continue to house grades six through eight, while the old middle school would become a kindergarten through eighth grade school. Dickinson and Heritage would continue to house kindergarten through fifth grade students.

The second option has Dickinson, Heritage and the old middle school housing kindergartners through sixth graders, while seventh and eighth graders would be attend De Pere Middle School, and the high school's capacity would increase by about 250 students for grades nine through 12.

Costs and specific improvements for the options have not been determined. The old middle school has been vacant since 1997.

"We need to look at what's best for the children and make a plan for that rather than present a dollar amount and then make sure everything fits..." board member Rose Hogan said.

The board's next step is to present the options to the facilities committee that planned the \$20 million May referendum that was defeated. That referendum called for a new elementary school, rebuilding the old middle school and renovations to Dickinson.

Options then will be brought to the public for further discussion, board President Ken Peters said.



Posted Jan. 6, 2000

De Pere schools weigh building plans

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - The De Pere School Board will present three building options to its facilities committee Wednesday in hopes of narrowing a plan that will be brought to residents at a public forum later this month.

The board and facilities committee that worked on the last referendum will meet at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at De Pere High School to discuss the options, which involve grade reconfiguration and possibly using the old middle school.

"We intend to present the options and then invite (the facilities committee) to be part of the process of narrowing it down to one," Board President Ken Peters said.

The options:

- * Turn the old middle school into a kindergarten through eighth grade school.
- * Create three kindergarten through sixth grade schools at Dickinson Elementary School, Heritage Elementary School and the old middle school.
- * Consider three kindergarten through fourth grade schools, a fifth and sixth grade school and a seventh and eighth grade school.

"We'll discuss the pros and cons of all three options with the (committee) and see if any further research needs to be done," Superintendent Richard Yenchesky said.

The board will present information it gathers from the committee to the public at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan 18, but Peters did not specify whether only one option would be presented.

"By the time we get to the open forum, one option should have bubbled to the surface as the best one, but we want the public's opinions before we settle on something for sure," Peters said.

"The forum is our best option for bringing information to the public."

A location for the forum hasn't been determined.

On Wednesday, Feb. 2, the board will hold a special meeting at 5 p.m. at De Pere High School to vote on a referendum resolution, which would be on the Tuesday, April 4, election ballot, Peters said.



Posted Jan. 13, 2000

Forum to feature three options

De Pere School District seeks input to develop referendum

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Three options addressing growing enrollment in the De Pere School District will be presented to residents at a public forum Tuesday.

Even though voters rejected a \$20 million building referendum in May, district needs haven't gone away. This time around, however, the district wants to involve the public as much as possible in planning a referendum, said Rob Lennon, director of pupil services.

"People felt they were left out of the decision making process last time," Lennon said.

The district predicts enrollment growth of about 100 students a year over the next 10 years, Lennon said. Total district enrollment currently is 2,735 students, nearing the district's 2,800 student capacity.

Taking input from October community focus groups and a districtwide survey in November, the De Pere School Board has designed three options to address the enrollment needs.

School Board President Ken Peters said the board will use residents' comments from Tuesday's forum to craft referendum questions at a special meeting Wednesday, Feb. 2.

A referendum could be on the ballot as soon as Tuesday, April 4.

Option one lists three kindergarten through sixth grade schools, one of which would be in the old middle school, a seventh and eighth grade school, and an expanded high school.

The second option involves two kindergarten through fifth grade schools, a middle school, an expanded high school and a kindergarten through eighth grade school in the old middle school.

The third option includes two kindergarten through fourth grade schools, a fifth and sixth grade school at the old middle school, a seventh and eighth grade school, and an expanded high school.

While the options don't call for building a new school, they would increase district capacity to 3,700 students, Lennon said. Specific costs for each option have not been determined yet, but Peters said each option probably would cost about \$20 million.

Chuck Martin, a member of the facility advisory committee that worked on the failed May referendum, said he prefers the third option because it seems to be better suited to social development of fifth and sixth grade students.

"My son is in fifth grade, and I can see that he might be outgrowing Dickinson (Elementary School)," Martin said. "I can understand how a school with just fifth and sixth graders might be a good thing. Can sixth graders compete with eighth graders?"

Some School Board members recently visited a fifth and sixth grade school in Waunakee and expressed positive opinions of what they saw.

"There are no 'big kids' or 'little kids' in the fifth and sixth grade school because they're so similar developmentally," board member Dawn Picard said.

Some concerns about the kindergarten through eighth grade school were raised, including whether residents would have a choice to send their children there, or if boundaries would have to be drawn to force enrollment at the school.

"Green Bay has Red Smith School, but they also have 23 elementary schools, so they can set up a choice school," Superintendent Dick Yenchesky said. "But with our population, there might have to be boundaries to get enrollment at the K-8 school."

Public forum

The De Pere School Board will hold a public forum at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at Heritage Elementary School to discuss three proposals to deal with school building needs.

The forum will be in the cafetorium of the school at 1250 Swan Road. It will last until 8 p.m.



Posted Jan. 19, 2000

Forum refocuses De Pere plans

Residents: School needs not being met

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Three school building options were presented to residents of the De Pere School District on Tuesday, but district officials say they may consider a fourth option for a referendum project after hearing residents questions and concerns.

About 50 residents attended a public forum at Heritage Elementary in which the School Board presented three options that could address the district's enrollment needs.

Total district enrollment is at about 2,770 students, about 30 students away from district's capacity, Director of Pupil Services Rob Lennon said. District enrollment has increased about 100 students per year over the last seven years, and that trend is expected to continue, Lennon said.

All three options, each of which involves using the old middle school and expanding the high school, would bring district capacity to 3,700 students, Lennon said. The board has said each of the options would cost about \$20 million.

Some residents expressed concern that core facilities - those such as libraries, gymnasiums, auditoriums and cafeterias - at the current buildings might not be adequate for expanded enrollments in those buildings.

De Pere resident Suse Riddle suggested a fourth option in which a new high school would be built, middle school students would move to the current high school and the current middle school would become a third elementary school.

"It is essential that core facilities are expended along with instructional space," Riddle said. "We need a fourth option to build a new high school so that its core facilities are improved to meet the needs of extracurricular and other enrichment programs."

Jeff Hoeksema, a district resident with children at Dickinson Elementary, the middle school and the high school, said core facilities at those schools already are inadequate.

"Kids are practicing basketball until nine at night because they don't have core facilities," Hoeksema said. "Kids shouldn't have to practice at that time of night because there isn't enough gym space."

Other residents said they were concerned about location of the old middle school, especially in terms of traffic.

"Traffic out there at 8 a.m. is terrible," said district resident Dennis Kondro. "It's dangerous for kids of any age."

Forum participants also said they wanted to see design plans for each option.

"The last referendum was defeated because of lack of planning," said resident Ken Anderson. "The mortar was barely dry on (Heritage Elementary School) and you asked for a new building. The same thing will happen here if we don't see some plans drawn out."

Lennon said the board did not present plans because when it did so during planning for the May referendum, which failed, residents accused the board of already having made a decisions on an option.

Residents who did favor one of the three options leaned toward the third option. That option would create kindergarten through fourth grade schools at Dickinson and Heritage, a fifth and sixth grade school in the old middle school, a seventh and eighth grade school in the middle school and an expanded high school.

"I often see the developmental benefits of putting fifth and sixth graders together," said Luke Warpinski, a family doctor in Green Bay. "They can develop and finish growing up in the stage they're in before they go on to school with other kids."

Board President Ken Peters said the board will take the feedback gathered at the forum and craft a referendum question intended for the Tuesday, April 4, ballot.



Posted Jan. 27, 2000

De Pere ponders school renovation options

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Initial studies by the De Pere School District indicate that renovating De Pere High School and the old middle school could cost almost \$28 million, but district officials stress that neither plans nor costs are set in stone.

"This is all very tentative," said Rob Lennon, the district's director of pupil services. "Absolutely no decisions have been made on costs or a building plan."

Last week, the district presented to the public three options for addressing the district's enrollment needs.

Each option would increase district capacity to 3,700 students from 2,800 students, which could meet growth needs for five to 10 years, district officials said. The district currently has 2,735 students.

In all options, the high school and the old middle school would be renovated, while Heritage Elementary School and the middle school would remain as they are. Lennon said some renovations could occur at Dickinson Elementary School, but those plans still are being discussed.

Preliminary costs for renovating the high school have come in around \$19 million, while renovating the old middle school could cost \$9.8 million. A tentative renovation plan for the high school includes 80,300 square feet of additions, including a 40,000 square foot , four basketball court fieldhouse. But De Pere High School Principal Matt Weller said athletic needs have not been determined yet.

"The whole fieldhouse discussion is premature," Weller said. "We've got data that still has to come in on what the needs are. Let's not go to the bank with this yet."

In all three options, high school capacity would be increased from 900 to 1,200 students.

Additionally, option one would create three kindergarten through sixth grade schools at Heritage, Dickinson and the old middle school. The middle school would become a seventh and eighth grade school.

In option two, Dickinson and Heritage would become kindergarten through fifth grade schools, the middle school would continue to house grades six through eight, and a kindergarten through eighth grade school would be created in the old middle school.

Option three would make Dickinson and Heritage kindergarten through fourth grade schools, the old middle school would be come a fifth and sixth grade school, and the middle school would house

grades seven and eight. When the three options were presented to the residents at a public forum last week, some residents suggested a fourth option in which a new high school would be part of the plan.

But according to district officials, such a plan could cost about \$60 million.

The De Pere School Board will meet Wednesday in hopes of crafting a referendum resolution for the Tuesday, April 4, ballot. Last May, voters rejected a \$20 million referendum for a new elementary school and renovations to the old middle school and Dickinson Elementary School.

"We will look at options as developed and work through them and hopefully make a decision" Wednesday. board President Ken Peters said.



Posted Feb. 1, 2000

Which grades go in which schools?

De Pere studies issue as part of building choices

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Principal Bonnie Emrick is a firm believer in the middle school concept - that a team environment focused on developmental needs is the best way to educate students in early adolescence.

On a daily basis, the De Pere Middle School principal interacts with kids who are dealing with growth spurts and the onset of puberty while teetering on the fence between childhood and adulthood.

That's why she stresses the importance of fostering a school environment that understands and works around the social, physical, emotional and academic needs of students in the middle years of youth.

"During those years (sixth through eighth grade), children change faster physically than at any time since their first year of life," Emrick said. "They're turning into adults, but they're still children. Therefore, educational programs must be based on social and developmental needs as well as academic needs."

As the De Pere School District works to come up with a building plan that will address the district's enrollment growth, student development issues are being raised in terms of various grade configurations of fifth through eighth grades in the district's schools.

On Wednesday, the School Board could choose from four options and craft a referendum that could be on the ballot as early as Tuesday, April 4.

Currently, sixth through eighth grade are taught according to the middle school concept, an idea that gained popularity in 1969 after the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development published Turning Points, a task force study on educating young adolescents, Emrick said.

Theoretically, the middle school concept allows teachers and students to get to know each other well, lets students explore a broad range of subjects and activities to suit their interests and helps the make the transition from elementary school to high school, Emrick said.

At De Pere Middle School, 75 to 90 students are grouped together in units, or "houses," in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade wings of the building. In each house, three teachers teach communications, math, science and social studies to classes of about 25 students, Emrick said. The students stay with the same house for an entire school year, allowing teachers to get to know students and their individual needs.

"We want all our students to get to know at least one adult very well," Emrick said. "At this age students are struggling with wanting to be independent but needing guidance, and we want them to have someone they feel comfortable talking to about anything from classes to their feelings."

While the middle school concept is not exclusive to schools that house sixth through eighth grades - the traditional middle school grades - the design of a school building is key to fostering the concept, Emrick said.

The traditional junior high school usually is set up to mirror high school, where students are on their own to navigate wings for different subjects. Seventh and eighth graders also are mixed together, Emrick said.

"The middle school concept can be implemented in a seventh and eighth grade school, but the administration has to be committed to it and the building has to be designed for it," Emrick said. "There has to be concern for where each student is in life, physically, socially and academically."

Creating a seventh and eighth grade school brings the issue of where to put sixth-graders. One option is to include them at the elementary level.

Another option suggests creating a separate fifth and sixth grade school.

Heritage Elementary School Principal Emmy Mayer said that while developmentally there is nothing wrong with putting sixth graders in an elementary school, sixth graders probably fit better in a school with fifth graders or in a middle school.

"By sixth grade, it's time for them to transition to that middle level," Mayer said.

In Waunakee, a school district in the Madison area, a fifth and sixth grade "intermediate" school has operated for four years.

"It has allowed us to take a serious look at what's best for the development of sixth graders," said Waunakee Intermediate School Principal Chris Hetzel.

"They get to stay kids longer, and there's no group vying to be top dog because they're all so close in age."

Hetzel said curricula at Waunakee Intermediate and Waunakee Middle School - a seventh and eighth grade school - are based on the team approach characteristic of the middle school concept.

De Pere buildings options

The De Pere School Board is considering these four options as ways to address the district's enrollment growth. The district has estimated that it could cost about \$9.8 million to renovate the old middle school, about \$18 million to renovate the high school and nearly \$50 million to build a new high school and renovate other schools. No renovations would occur at Heritage Elementary School. It has not yet been determined if Dickinson Elementary School would be renovated.

Option 1		
School	Proposed grade configuration	Proposed capacity
Dickinson	K-6	500-600
Heritage	K-6	650
Old Middle school	K-6	600
Middle school	7-8	650
High school	9-12	1,200
District capacity		3,700
Option 2		
Dickinson	K-5	500-600
Heritage	K-5	650
Middle school	6-8	650
High school	9-12	1,200
Old middle school	K-8	600
District capacity		3,700
Option 3		
Dickinson	K-4	500-600
Heritage	K-4	650
Old middle school	5-6	600
Middle school	7-8	650
High school	9-12	1,200
District capacity		3,700
Option 4		
Dickinson	K-5	500-600
Heritage	K-5	650
Middle school	K-5	650
Old high school	6-8	900
New high school	9-12	1,200
District capacity		4,000

Source: De Pere School District



Posted Feb. 9, 2000

De Pere to draft vote question

School Board hopes to agree on wording tonight

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Wording for the De Pere School District's spring referendum could be set at a special meeting tonight.

On Tuesday, April 4, voters in the district will be asked to support a \$28 million referendum to renovate the old middle school, and the high school.

In May, voters rejected a \$20 million plan to build a new elementary school in Ledgeview and renovate the old middle school and Dickinson Elementary School.

Superintendent Richard Yenchesky hopes the new plan is more in line with taxpayers' wishes.

"This is a response to input we've received from the community," Yenchesky said. "There's more than one way to solve a problem."

The plan would turn Dickinson and Heritage Elementary schools into kindergarten through fourth grade schools; renovate the old middle school, creating a fifth and sixth grade school there; keep grades seven and eight at the current middle school; and renovate and expand the high school.

District capacity is 2,800 students, and the plan would increase that to 3,700 students. About 2,735 students now are enrolled in De Pere schools.

Call it an attempt at large scale recycling. The school district calls it making good use of the facilities it has to address enrollment growth.

At the old middle school, \$9 million would be spent to raze everything south and east of its gymnasium and give a complete face lift to what's left inside, Yenchesky said.

The price is about \$500,000 more than the figure given in the May referendum, but Yenchesky said that is due to inflation.

The gym would become an instructional media center, and the auditorium and classrooms would be remodeled. A new gym, commons area, technology center, band area and administrative office would be built. New lighting and windows as well as heating, air conditioning, electrical and circulation systems would be put in, Yenchesky said.

A remodeled old middle school, with about 40,000 square feet of additions, would accommodate 600 students.

De Pere Middle School Principal Bonnie Emrick said the middle school concept - that a team environment focused on developmental needs is the best way to educate students in early adolescence - can be implemented at the fifth and sixth grade school.

"It will allow us to focus our efforts on a smaller group," Emrick said.

About \$19 million would be spent to renovate and expand the high school capacity from 900 to 1200 students. Ten general classrooms would be added, as well as five new combined science lab classrooms and two science classrooms. The current science area would be remodeled, as would the instructional media center and other classrooms.

A 40,000 square foot gym would be built, allowing for part of the current gym to become a band and music area. Most of the rest of it would become a commons area.

A total of 84,500 square feet would be added to the high school.

No money would be put into Heritage or the current middle school. The School Board has not decided whether Dickinson should be renovated.



Posted Feb. 10, 2000

De Pere referendum will include Dickinson

Proposal allots \$1.4 million for grade school

By: Heather Stur

DE PERE - The De Pere School Board voted to add renovating Dickinson Elementary School to the school district's spring referendum, raising the project's price to \$29.4 million.

The Tuesday, April 4, referendum will be presented as two questions.

The first will ask voters to approve a \$29.4 million project: \$1.4 million to renovate Dickinson, \$9 million to revamp the old middle school and \$19 million to expand the high school.

The second question will ask for voter approval of \$1.5 million in operating costs for the renovated buildings.

Operating costs are those needed to staff and maintain a school building, said Jeff Seeley, district business manager. Because the state imposes revenue limits on districts, they must get voter approval to exceed those limits to operate and maintain buildings, said Rob Lennon, director of pupil services for the district.

If both questions pass, and factors such as state aid, enrollment and equalized property valuation do not change, the project would have a tax impact of about \$2.80 per \$1,000 of equalized property value, Seeley said. Individual tax bills are based on assessed value.

Proposed renovations to Dickinson include a new gymnasium, an expanded library and media center, and an expended cafetorium - a combined cafeteria and auditorium.

The renovations would bring the school's core facilities capacity to 600 students. The current capacity of the core facilities - such as the gym, auditorium and cafeteria - is about 450 to 500 students, Lennon said. Dickinson's classroom capacity is 600 students.

Dickinson's roof also would be repaired, but that cost would be factored into the operating costs, Lennon said.

The board is expected to approve formal resolutions at its meeting Wednesday.



Posted Feb. 17, 2000

De Pere postpones school vote

Board wants more time to explain its proposal

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - After addressing concerns about the amount of time needed to educate the public on a school building proposal, the De Pere School Board voted unanimously to postpone its referendum until Tuesday, May 23.

"We need to give ourselves enough time to explain to people what we're trying to do and why we need this," Superintendent Richard Yenchesky said.

The board originally voted to present its \$29.3 million referendum on the Tuesday, April 4, ballot but decided Wednesday to take more time to present information about the proposals to the public, board President Ken Peters said.

The referendum project allots \$1.36 million to pay for renovations to Dickinson Elementary School, \$9.76 million to revamp the old middle school and \$18.19 million to expand the high school. It also would allow the district to exceed revenue limits by \$1.52 million a year for operationing costs associated with the renovated buildings.

The project could have a tax impact of \$2.80 per \$1,000 of equalized property valuation.

If passed, the project would create kindergarten through fourth grade schools at Dickinson and Heritage elementary schools, move fifth and sixth grade into an intermediate school, at the old middle school, keep grades seven and eight at the current middle school and expand the high school capacity from 900 to 1,200 students.

The high school's core buildings - such as the gymnasium, cafeteria and library - would be expanded to accommodate 1,400 students, said Rob Lennon, director of pupil services.

That should accommodate overall enrollment growth for about five years. At that time, the district's kindergarten through fourth grade population is projected to reach 1,250, the capacity of the proposed elementary projects, Lennon said.

Under the proposal, the intermediate school and renovated high school are not expected to reach capacity for about 10 years, and the middle school is not projected to reach capacity for about 15 years, Lennon said.

The district has said that student enrollment has grown by about 100 students a year, and that trend is expected to continue. The district's capacity is 2,800 students, and the plan would increase capacity to 3,700 students.

About 2,735 students are enrolled in the district's schools.



Posted Mar. 16, 2000

De Pere teachers want to remove age cap on payouts

Educators retiring at age 57 get benefits until 65

By: Heather Stur

DE PERE - Teachers clad in black T-shirts blaring the phrase "DPEA United!" petitioned the De Pere School Board on Wednesday to remove a retirement benefits payout age cap from their contract.

The De Pere Education Association and the board have been negotiating a new teachers' contract.

Their contract expired June 30.

It allowed teachers to retire with benefits at age 57. However, payout on those benefits ends at age 65, said Mike Kaczmarzinski, DPEA president and a sixth grade teacher at De Pere Middle School.

The union wants that age cap removed, said Kaczmarzinski, who has been teaching in the district for 29 years.

Sixth-grade teacher Glenn Lehnert, who has worked for the district for 22 years, received a standing ovation from teachers at the board meeting after he demanded that retired teachers be compensated fairly for their service to the district.

"Your employees who would be eligible to retire have given the children of De Pere decades of service," Lehnert said. "They are asking for a stipend that would basically cover (health) insurance."

Kaczmarzinski said the union's analysis of what the district pays veteran teachers vs. what it pays new hires shows that the money saved by hiring new teachers at the lower pay scale to replace retiring veteran teachers could allow the district to do away with the benefits payout age cap.

At the meeting, Lehnert presented to the board a chart showing that the district saved \$106,000 to \$228,000 over eight years when replacing a veteran teacher with a new hire. The union thinks those savings should be passed on to retirees.

Kaczmarzinski said there are about 190 full and part time teachers in the union.

The board would not comment on the issue because contract negotiations are in progress, board President Ken Peters said.



Posted Apr. 5, 2000

Barnes, Paque get seats on De Pere School Board

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - New blood will be infused into the De Pere School Board, with Suzanne Barnes and Jonathan Paque winning the two open seats on the board in Tuesday's election.

Barnes, 50, and Jonathan Paque, 47, beat Amy Fullerton, 32, and Wanda Hansen, 47, for the seats, which have three-year terms and pay \$2,050 a year.

Board president Ken Peters and board member McKim Boyd did not seek re-election.

Barnes, 903 Fox River Drive, stressed the need to plan for growth in the district.

Her platform included a push for innovation in math teaching at the elementary level and foreign language offers at younger ages.

Barnes is a family practice physician at Aurora Deckner Medical Center in Green Bay. She is a writing, math and reading volunteer at Dickinson and Heritage elementary schools and was active in expansion of the foreign language program at De Pere Middle School in 1999.

Paque, 609 S. Superior St., focused on informing residents about school facility needs and getting public input to find a solution to crowding in De Pere schools.

He also stressed the need to value teachers, the key to quality education, he said.

Paque is an institutional research and state reporting specialist for Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton.

He is a member of the De Pere School District Referendum Steering Committee.

In the past, Paque has been involved with Project Literacy U.S. for the Green Bay area and the United Way of Brown County Youth Resources Council.

Fullerton, 1768 Martinwood Court, had said the most important issues facing the district are facilities and educational programs and said long range planning is crucial.

Hansen, 1915 Ledgeview Road, focused on addressing growth while being fiscally responsible to taxpayers and the way to maintain quality education in the district.



Posted Apr. 10, 2000

School Board candidate to ask for recount

Amy Fullerton, who lost a race for De Pere School Board by just three votes last week, planned to request a recount this morning.

Fullerton said she agonized over the decision because "I felt all four of us were very qualified and would bring something good to the board.

But the race was so close, she felt a recount was necessary. All four candidates finished within 315 votes of each other, according to the unofficial count.

Suzanne Barnes with 1,469 votes and Jonathan Paque with 1,414 were the winners. Fullerton followed with 1,411, and Wanda Hansen had 1,154.

Fullerton co-chairs a citizens' committee working to pass a \$29.31 million referendum, but she said the vote wasn't related to public sentiment about building plans. The other candidates also were of district needs and support the referendum, scheduled for May 23.

The project would allot \$1.36 million for renovations to Dickinson Elementary School, \$9.76 million to revamp the former middle school and \$18.19 million to expand the high school. It also would allow the district to exceed revenue limits by \$1.52 million a year for operational costs associated with the project.

Janine Rasmussen, De Pere School Board secretary, said she was checking with the State Elections Board today to determine the recount procedure. It likely wouldn't happen until after Wednesday, she said.

"Any way that it turns out will be good for the district," Fullerton said.



Posted Apr. 29, 2000

Forums set for De Pere school referendum

Residents will be asked to approve \$29.4 million for renovation plan

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - De Pere School District residents will have at least two chances to get answers to their questions about the district's May 23 referendum.

Forums will be held Monday and Wednesday to help educate residents about the proposed referendum project, said Steve Broniarczyk, a member of the district's Citizens Committee for Referendum 2000.

The district has proposed a \$29.4 million project to renovate Dickinson Elementary School, the old middle school and the high school. Grades 5 and 6 would be moved from the elementary and middle schools to the old middle school.

Voters also will be asked whether the district can exceed state imposed revenue limits by \$1.5 million a year to cover operational costs of the renovated buildings. If both questions pass, the project could have a tax impact of \$3 per \$1,000 of equalized property value, or \$300 on a \$100,000 home.

Equalized value - the total value of property in a school district - lets the district determine how much money each municipality will pay.

Actual tax bills are based on how much a community says a piece of property is worth, so the amount taxpayers actually pay for schools will vary depending on where they live.

The forums will be set up as open houses in which residents can stop at different booths to get answers to questions on specific parts of the project, said Amy Fullerton, co-chairwoman of the Citizens Committee.

"People can come in and spend 20 minutes talking one-on-one with someone and really get their specific questions answered," Fullerton said.

Principals, district officials and members of the Citizens Committee will be available at the forum to answer questions, Fullerton said.

Broniarczyk said the forums are part of a continuing series of efforts to educate the public about the referendum. A four page pamphlet outlining the projects and costs was sent to residents in the district's spring newsletter, and members of the Citizens Committee have been out discussing the referendum with residents, she said.

"The closer we get to May 23, the more people will get interested in the referendum," Broniarczyk said.



Posted May 2, 2000

De Pere district residents air concerns

Referendum on proposed school renovation subject of forum

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Residents armed with questions about the De Pere School District's May 23 referendum chatted with district representatives Monday at a forum about the referendum.

The district has proposed a \$29.3 million project to renovate Dickinson Elementary School, the old middle school and the high school. Grades 5 and 6 would be moved from the elementary and middle schools to the old middle school.

The referendum also will ask voters to allow the district to exceed state revenue limits by \$1.5 million a year to cover the costs to operate the renovated buildings.

Paul Sauvey, a De Pere resident with a daughter in first grade at Heritage Elementary School, said he came to the forum for more information on the operational; question.

"I wanted to make sure the funds they're looking for were going to things that are needed," said Sauvey, who has not decided which way he will vote. "From what I've learned tonight, the money is needed."

De Pere resident Don Thyres said he is against the plan because of the money allotted to building a 31,750 square-foot physical education addition. It includes a four station gym and lobby area.

"I'm for education but would like to see schools build classrooms, not recreation centers," Thyres said.

Steve Broniarczyk, a member of the district's Citizens Committee, said giving the public as many opportunities as possible to educate themselves about the plan is critical.

"We hope they'll see that this is not something that was just put together in a closed meeting," Broniarczyk said. "It was developed through input from the community."

Superintendent Richard Yenchesky said the district is trying to plan for long term growth with the project. For example, renovations to the high school would increase its capacity from 900 to 1,200 students. Core facilities such as the gym, library and commons would be designed for up to 1,400 students.

"This proposal is proactive in planning for the future," Yenchesky said.

"Otherwise you get criticized for not looking ahead."

The district will hold additional forums Wednesday, May 11 and May 18.



Posted Jun. 22, 2000

School spending rise likely in De Pere

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Preliminary 2000-01 budget figures for the De Pere School District show a 9.3 percent spending increase due primarily to a 4 percent increase in teachers' salaries and plans to hire more teachers, district officials said Wednesday.

District projections estimate spending \$18.75 million vs. \$17.15 budgeted for the 1999-00 school year. The increase would accommodate the teachers' salary increase and the need to hire more teachers due to enrollment growth, said Jeff Seeley, district business manager.

The preliminary budget includes a property tax rate of \$9.42 per \$1,000 of equalized property valuation. That's about 1.4 percent higher than the 1999-00 rate of \$9.29.

The district bases its projected tax rates on equalized values of property. However, municipalities use assessed values when taxing residents so the numbers could vary depending on the municipality.

The district assumed 5 percent enrollment growth when calculating the rate but expects actual growth to be higher, Seeley said. Higher growth would bring the tax rate down, he said.

"This is all very preliminary," Seeley said. "We were very conservative in our projections. The tax rate probably will go down once we get our enrollment data in September."

The tax rate does not reflect the \$29.4 million referendum for school building projects that passed May 23.

The project, including a revenue cap increase, is expected to have a tax impact of \$3 per \$1,000 of equalized property valuation in its highest year and will be reflected on tax bills starting in the 2001-02 school year, said Rob Lennon, director of pupil services.

The district has projected the tax levy, the part of the budget funded by taxpayers, to be about \$8.1 million, a 6.6 percent increase over the 1999-2000 levy of \$7.6 million.

Budget figures

De Pere School District's 2000-01 projected budget figures:

*Spending: \$18.75 million vs. \$17.15 million in 1999-2000.

*Projected tax levy: \$8.1 million vs. \$7.6 million in 1999-2000.

*Tax rate: \$9.42 per \$1,000 of equalized property value vs. \$9.29 per \$1,000 in 1999-2000.



Posted Sep. 15, 2000

Parts of De Pere school torn down for renovation

Former middle school slated, to open next year

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Do people really live in the tunnels under the old De Pere Middle School?

That's an urban myth De Pere resident Sue Smits, a 1970 graduate of De Pere High School, said she's never heard. But she does know about the tunnels.

"You could always find something down there," Smits said of the service tunnels under the school, which was De Pere High School when Smits attended. "There were a lot of cobwebs."

De Pere School District Superintendent Richard Yenchesky discovered the tunnels and the myth this summer when asbestos was removed.

It was the first step of a facelift that will bring the 100 year old school on Broadway into the 21st century.

The construction portion of the \$9.76 million project of updating the old middle school to create a fifth and sixth grade intermediate school began Monday when the school's south portion was demolished.

The project is part of a \$29.4 million referendum voters in the De Pere School District approved in May.

The school is expected to open for the 2001-02 school year, said Larry Rocolle of J.P. Cullen & Sons Inc., one of the companies working on the project.

The school was built piece-meal beginning in the early 1900s. Additions were built in the 1930s and the 1960s.

Although efforts will be made to retain the historic quality of the school, which sits directly across from the Fox River, the inside will be gutted and modernized, said Yenchesky.

"It's going to be a new building," he said.

The school will get a new gymnasium, commons, and music area. The auditorium and the library will be remodeled.

Smits said she's excited to see how the school, which has been vacant for more than three years, will look when the dust settles and the doors swing open to welcome new generations of students.

"It's really cool that we're revitalizing it," Smits said.



Posted Oct. 14, 2000

High School staff member faces child porn charges

De Pere places employee on paid leave

By Mike Hoeft and Andy Nelesen

A De Pere High School staff member was charged Friday with possession of child pornography after he allegedly showed it to a college intern.

Thomas Janiak, 51, director of media services for the school, has been placed on paid administrative leave and was in Brown County intake court Friday.

If convicted, Janiak could face five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. He was released from jail Friday on a signature bond.

"We took the most appropriate action and temporarily removed him from the workplace pending completion of our investigation," De Pere School Superintendent Richard Yenchesky said Friday.

"That's the normal procedure," he said. He stressed that the reports are allegations.

"We are not aware that any students were involved," Yenchesky added.

A 19 year old man reported Janiak made unwanted sexual advances toward him, according to court records filed Friday in connection with a search warrant of Janiak's home.

The man, a college intern working at the school, said he went to Janiak's home in August to help Janiak move. During the move, Janiak allegedly showed the intern a hardcovered book with black and white pictures of children involved in sex acts, according to the criminal complaint filed Friday.

Janiak showed the book to Brown County Sheriff's Department investigators when they came to his Fox Croft Drive home Thursday. Janiak was arrested and jailed late Thursday.

A school laptop computer that Janiak used was found to contain a variety of pornographic entries, court files said.

Police and school district officials will conduct separate investigations.

Janiak is expected back in court Wednesday.

Janiak was hired by the De Pere School District in November 1997 as interim director of technology. He later became a full time director of media services in June 1998.



Posted Oct. 25, 2000

De Pere superintendent faces "no confidence" vote by union

By Paul Srubas

Staff morale is so poor among De Pere teachers and staff that the union may consider a vote of "no confidence" in Superintendent Dick Yenchsky, according to the union's representative council.

"During the reign of the current superintendent, the workplace environment has deteriorated from a relaxed, friendly, "family" environment to one of fear and hostility," the De Pere Education Association's representative council wrote to its members Monday.

The "proverbial straw that broke the camel's back" was the recent placement of district business manager Jeff Seeley on administrative leave, the letter said.

Seeley became business manager in June 1999 after serving the same role in the Ashwaubenon School District since 1992. Yenchsky ordered him placed on administrative leave Sept. 21, before the district's budget process began.

Yenchsky has refused to say why he took the action, not would he say when Seeley might return to the job.

On the advise of his lawyer, Seeley has declined to comment publicly on the issue.

The representative council's letter doesn't say why the group objects to Yenchsky's action in the Seeley matter.

"It is with great sadness and great risk that the DPEA Representative Council must begin dialogue that may lead to a vote of no confidence in the district administrator because he is no longer a credible leader and cannot work effectively with staff," the letter said.

Yenchsky did not return a phone call this morning. He has been superintendent since May 1984.



Posted Oct. 26, 2000

Board backs school boss

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - The De Pere School Board gave a vote of confidence Wednesday to Superintendent Richard Yenchesky, in response to the threat of a no-confidence vote from the school district's teachers union.

"We're grateful to have the leadership and service he has provided," clerk Dawn Picard said. "And we're very grateful to have some one with experience and professionalism and passion for students that Disk (Yenchesky) has."

The De Pere Education Association issued a statement Monday that the union's Representative Council will discuss taking a vote of no confidence in Yenchesky "because he is no longer a credible leader and cannot work effectively with staff."

Yenchesky, who has been De Pere's superintendent for 17 years, said he is disappointed by the union's statement.

"I'm very proud of every minute of time I've spent here," Yenchesky said. "I have a good working relationship with the staff. When you go 17 years, you're bound to have some difficulties."

The letter stated that the dismissal in September of district business manager Jeff Seeley was the "proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, " motivating education association officials to begin discussing a no confidence vote.

Although Seeley was not a member of the union, he was a resource person to union members, union President Randy Soquet said.

:Jeff was a person that a number of our staff members needed to work with as far as insurance issues," Soquet said. "And he worked with our retirees as far as explaining retirement benefits."

Yenchesky has declined to comment on Seeley's removal. Seeley also has requested a public hearing regarding the dismissal, but a hearing date has not been set.

School Board President Pamela Wilson said the board supports Yenchesky.

"If you look at Dick's record, he longevity, students' test scores and spending per student .. it's a credit to Dick's leadership," Wilson said,

Wilson also referred to a cultural survey that was taken of district employees about two years ago. She

said the survey indicated employee morale was high.

The union has not set a schedule defining how it will proceed, Soquet said.

"Member need to come to a decision as far as how they feel about taking action, if they want to take action and what action that would be," Soquet said.

If the union issues a non confidence vote, it would bring the vote to the School Board. Wilson said she does not know what the next step would be because a no confidence vote would be the first in the district's history.

* Also Wednesday, the School Board adopted the tax levy and tax rate for the 2000-01 school year. The tax levy, the portion of the school district's budget paid by property taxes, is about \$9.5 million, resulting in a tax rate of \$10.75 per \$1,000 of equalized property valuation.

The rate reflected on property tax bills is calculated according to assessed property value, so property owners may see different numbers depending on the municipality in which they live.

Yenchesky file

Name: Richard Yenchesky

Job: Superintendent, De Pere School District

Years as superintendent: 17, Contracts come up for renewal every two years. Yenchesky's contract most recently was renewed this year.

Salary: \$106,838 for the 2000-01 school year

Hometown: Marion

Education: bachelor's degree, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, master's degree Northern Michigan University; education specialist degree, Western Michigan University



Posted Jan. 4, 2001

Old De Pere middle school renovation is over budget

By Heather Stur

High school project funds could pay extra

DE PERE - Money set aside for the high school portion of the De Pere School District building project could cover extra spending for a fifth and sixth grade school.

The proposed intermediate school project, which will transform the former middle school on Broadway into a fifth and sixth grade school, is about \$173,000 over the \$9.76 million budget voters approved in a May referendum.

The referendum approved a \$29.3 million project to renovate the old middle school, De Pere High School, and Dickinson Elementary School.

Furniture and technology have added \$100,000 and \$80,000 respectively. None of the furniture, including chairs and desks, from the old middle school is being used. Adding a sprinkler system to the school, removing asbestos from the roof and removing bad soil from beneath the building also increased the cost of the project.

"We're basically razing and rebuilding... and there's some guesswork. There's a risk because you don't know what's going to be behind the walls," Superintendent Richard Yenchesky said.

To try and offset the increases, the project's general contractors modified parts of the project, saving \$78,000 by using a curtain instead of a panel to divide the gym and knocking off about \$94,000 from a plumbing budget.

But that leaves the project still \$172,970 over budget.

Larry Rocolle of J.P. Cullen and Sons, the project's general-contracting firm, suggested the School Board consider taking money from the high school's furniture, equipment or technology budgets.

"You need to define where you want to go with technology," Rocolle said.

Yenchesky said the intermediate school should be on par with Heritage Elementary School and De Pere Middle School, the district's newest schools, especially in terms of technology.

The board asked that Rocolle come back with a more specific list of cuts that could be made to the high school and intermediate school projects and improvements or construction that could be delayed until more money is available. The board is expected to meet at the end of the month to discuss the options.

The intermediate school could open for the 2001-02 school year. Construction could start this spring at the high school.



Posted Jan. 7, 2001

De Pere official asks public to hearing

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Jeff Seeley hopes a large crowd of residents will turn out this week for a hearing to review the nonrenewal of his contract with the De Pere School District.

"I encourage residents of the district to come and see for themselves what the issues are," Seeley said. "I don't believe I've done anything to warrant this type of activity."

Seeley, the district's business manager was placed on paid administrative leave in September. He said he was not given a specific reason for being placed on leave.

Superintendent Richard Yenchesky and the De Pere School Board have declined to comment on the issue.

The hearing will begin at 4:15 p.m. Tuesday in the De Pere High School auditorium.

It's open to the public and could continue through Wednesday and Thursday and possibly after that, School Board President Dawn Picard said. It is being held in the late afternoon to accommodate the schedules of those involved in the hearing.

Seeley's notice of administrative leave states that the School Board "is informed that district operations and planning have been interfered with and disrupted by your presence in the office, to the detriment of the needs of the school district." Examples of specific wrong-doing are not listed.

A letter to Seeley from Picard states the reason the board is considering not renewing Seeley's contract is "concern whether Mr. Seeley performed satisfactorily in the position." But no specific reasons are included.

The district hired Seeley in June 1999. Before coming to De Pere, Seeley worked for seven years as the Ashwaubenon School District's business manager. Seeley's salary for the 2000-01 school year is \$83,533.

Mike Julka, attorney for the School Board, said that at the hearing, Yenchesky, along with the legal counsel and possibly witnesses, will recommend to the board nonrenewal of Seeley's contract.

Then Seeley will present to the board arguments and evidence supporting renewal of his contract. He may also use attorneys and witnesses, Julka said.

After hearing both sides, the full School Board will decide whether to renew Seeley's contract.

"I think it would be good for the taxpayers to come and see what's going on in the district," Seeley said.



Posted Jan.10, 2001

Public left out of Seeley hearing

Closed session delays open hearing 4 hours

By Heather Stur

A crowd of more than 200 showed up for the nonrenewal hearing of De Pere School District business manager Jeff Seeley, but only about half of them were left when the School Board returned from a nearly four hour closed session to start the public portion of the hearing.

"I think it stinks," De Pere resident Margaret Keehan said. "This is very unprofessional. They had six months to get this set up."

The hearing for the possible contract nonrenewal for Seeley, who was placed on paid administrative leave in September, began Tuesday in the De Pere High School auditorium with a closed session at about 3:40 p.m.

The School Board told the audience that the session would last about 30 to 40 minutes, but the board did not come out until almost hours later.

When the board returned to open session, Superintendent Richard Yenchesky claimed that Seeley contributed to a negative work environment in the De Pere School District central office, did not take instruction from Yenchesky and paid an office employee a salary not authorized by Yenchesky.

"He's young, he's got a lot of energy, and he has a tendency between being confident and letting his ego show through," Yenchesky said.

De Pere resident James Golembeski, wondered if the board was following the law in terms of what can be discussed in a closed session.

"There are only very specific things that the law allows you to go into a closed session for," said Golembeski, who is the executive director of the Bay Area Workforce Development Board. "For the closed session to last this long, it leads me to question if they're sticking to the topics they're allowed by law to talk about in a closed session."

Another audience member, De Pere resident Jake David, said the long, closed session was a poor example of representation on the part of the School Board.

"The board was elected by the constituents. They're supposed to be our voice," David said. "I would like to know what I've been saying for two hours in that closed session. Is this representation?"

After the closed session had lasted more than an hour and a half, audience members began clapping in an attempt to get the public part of the hearing started.

Shortly after that, the De Pere High School booster club brought carts of snacks, soda, popcorn, and bottled water into the auditorium to sell to the audience.

Ralph and Mary Baumgart, lifelong De Pere residents, attended the hearing for more information about the Seeley issue. But after waiting about two hours for the closed session to end, they said they'd probably leave before the public hearing started.

"This is horrendous," Mary Baumgart said. It's very inconsiderate to the people. They should have gotten this all taken care of beforehand."

Ralph Baumgart said the school district has not been upfront with the public about why Seeley was placed on leave, and it continued to not be upfront by holding the long, closed session. "This is supposed to be a public hearing. The superintendent should be held responsible for putting this man on leave."

Proceedings still were taking place after 10 p.m. Tuesday. The hearing will resume today at 3:30 p.m.



Posted Jan.11, 2001

Yenchesky details nonrenewal issues

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - During about three and a half hours of testimony Wednesday, De Pere School District Superintendent Richard Yenchesky claimed that the district's business manager, Jeff Seeley, ignored directions, failed to understand district, budgeting procedures and changed district procedures without authorization.

Day two of Seeley's nonrenewal hearing began at about 3:30 p.m. in the De Pere High School auditorium.

It started with questioning of Yenchesky by his own attorney, James Ruhly. Yenchesky talked about what he believed to be failed attempts to correct differences with Seeley and about concerns he had with Seeley's preparation of the 2000-01 budget.

He also stated that Seeley made unauthorized changes to the way the district computes early retirement benefits and gave an employee more vacation time than was approved.

Seeley was placed on paid administrative leave Sept. 20. He has said he was not given reasons why he was put on leave. The letter that indicates his leave status does not state specific reasons.

Seeley has said he requested that his nonrenewal hearing be held in public so that district residents can find out for themselves what the issues are.

About 125 people came out Wednesday. On Tuesday more than 200 showed up. De Pere resident Nancy Lindgren came to the hearing Wednesday to learn more about the case.

"I'm waiting to hear both sides," said Lindgren, who has lived in the district for five years.

"It's kind of sad to hear the specifics about administrators not getting along, but I'm glad they're doing it in open session."

Yenchesky testified that Seeley's evaluation on May 30, 2000, turned into a "blowup" between Seeley and Yenchesky where at one point Yenchesky suggested that Seeley "turn in your (expletive) resignation."

Yenchesky said he later apologized to the district office staff for the outburst.

In July the two discussed ways to mend their working relationship, such as meeting weekly, but Yenchesky said he believed Seeley's attempts to work things out as a "cursory type of gesture," Yenchesky said.

"There was continued noncompliance and nonresponse to my requests," Yenchesky said.

He testified that he began to have budget concerns in June when Seeley made a budget presentation to the School Board, indicating that "we had missed out budget goal by over \$1 million," Yenchesky said.

When asked by a reporter during a break in the hearing what "missed our budget" meant, Ruhly advised Yenchesky not to comment.

Yenchesky testified that people the district employed to finish the budget after Seeley was placed on leave could not find some data and worksheets needed for the budget.

One person currently helping with the budget is retired Luxemburg-Casco Superintendent Raymond Thillman.

When Seeley's attorney Gordon McQuillen, asked Thillman during testimony Wednesday if he had asked Seeley where the data was, Thillman said he did not recall having a conversation with Seeley.

Yenchesky also testified that Seeley changed the district's calculation of early retirement benefits with authorization to do so.

The hearing continued past 10 p.m. Wednesday. It resumes at 3:30 p.m. today.

Jeff Seeley case at a glance

What's at stake: Jeff Seeley, the De Pere School District's business manager, was placed on paid administrative leave Sept. 20. Specific reasons for why Seeley was placed on leave and why the De Pere School Board would consider not renewing his employment contract were not given.

Superintendent Richard Yenchesky and Seeley, along with their attorneys and witnesses, will make their cases to the School Board. The board on a majority vote - four votes - will make the final decision to renew or not renew Seeley's contract.

Board President Pamela Wilson has excused herself from the hearing. She said Tuesday that it was because Yenchesky had mentored her son, and Seeley and his attorney, Gordon McQuillen, expressed concern that the board could be biased against Seeley.

Key people: Jeff Seeley and his attorney, Gordon McQuillen; Yenchesky and his attorney, James Ruhly; School Board members John Koser, Dawn Picard, Rose Hogan, Cherly Kalny, Suzanne Barnes and Jon Paque and the board's attorney, Mike Julka.

What happened Tuesday: The hearing began with a four hour closed session involving the board and its attorney. The board cited a state statute to consider employment and nonrenewal issues and to confer with lawyers on those issues.

When the board returned to open session, Yenchesky said Seeley did not cooperate with Yenchesky or follow his instructions, was insubordinate and did not treat his coworkers as equals. Yenchesky also testified that Seeley did not understand the district's budget procedures and paid an office employee a salary that Yenchesky did not authorize.



Posted Jan.12, 2001

Seeley's budget data questioned

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - De Pere School District Superintendent Richard Yenchesky testified Thursday that the discovery of about \$1.2 million surplus led him to be concerned with the business manager's handling of the budget process.

His testimony came during the third day of the employment contract nonrenewal hearing for Jeff Seeley, the district's business manager.

Seeley was placed on paid administrative leave Sept. 20 but was not given a reason.

Seeley requested a public nonrenewal hearing. About 125 people attended the hearing Thursday. Tuesday, the first day of the hearing, drew more than 200 people. About 125 people showed up Wednesday.

During cross examination by Seeley's attorney, Gordon McQuillen, Yenchesky said Thursday that he saw the 2000-01 budget outlines and totals before the School Board approved the budget in August.

But he added that people the district has employed to work on the 2001-02 budget since Seeley was placed on leave have been unable to find records and data Seeley used to compute the 2000-01 budget.

"As we go back, we find figures out there, but there are a lot of figures there are question about," Yenchesky said.

Another reason Yenchesky gave for recommending Seeley's contract not be renewed was that Seeley was "not a cohesive force within our office" and he does not follow Yenchesky's requests.

Yenchesky went on to tell a story about an event that occurred in October 1999, when a district office employee Seeley hired needed help with one of her duties.

Yenchesky testified that Seeley was on vacation at the time, so Yenchesky called Seeley's wife and said, "Get your husband in here."

Seeley returned early from his vacation to come to the office, Yenchesky said.

"We have not gone on vacation since 1984 when there is work to be done," said Yenchesky, who was hired by the De Pere School District in 1984. "More people have gone on vacation since Jeff Seeley came than in my whole tenure here."

Yenchesky said he later apologized to Seeley for calling him in while he was on vacation, "but we needed his help."

Hired in June '99

The district hired Seeley in June 1999. Prior to coming to De Pere, Seeley was the business manager for the Ashwaubenon School District from 1992 until 1999. Seeley's salary for the 2000-01 school year is \$83,533.

Testimony revealed Thursday that during the hiring process, Yenchesky contacted Seeley's references, including

Green Bay Press Gazette - Seeley's budget data questioned

Ashwaubenon School District Superintendent Jim Stillman. He said they "could support" the questions he asked them.

"I don't know if they recommended that he be hired," Yenchesky said.

"The questions I asked, they could support. I don't ask anyone who I should hire or fire."

Seeley's interview included meeting with two teams of six to eight people each, made up of school board members, district office staff and teachers.

Higher salary

Yenchesky also testified that he granted Seeley's request of a salary higher than what the previous business manager received.

The School Board approved Seeley's contract unanimously after "major discussion" about the salary issue, Yenchesky said.

Yenchesky addressed issues in which he believed Seeley did not contribute to the "team environment" of the district office.

He testified that he thought Seeley's contract should not be renewed partly because Seeley "had little respect for those older than he" and because he "seeks control."

Negative tertiary aid

Yenchesky said that during a meeting in which he, Seeley and other district officials discussed why the May 1999 referendum failed, Seeley brought up the issue of negative tertiary aid.

Negative tertiary aide occurs when a school district's property value growth exceeds its student enrollment growth.

Calculation of state aid for school districts in the negative tertiary aid category is different than the state aid formula used for regular districts because negative tertiary aid districts receive less state aid.

The Ashwaubenon district is considered a negative tertiary aid district.

Yenchesky testified that the De Pere School District, while not presently a negative tertiary aid district, may become one. But he became angry with Seeley for discussing the issue during that meeting.

"It was not the appropriate time for him to show his expertise in the area," Yenchesky said. "What he was insisting was not wrong, but it was incongruent with the discussion. You can bring it to my attention but don't argue with me."

Last May 31, Yenchesky and Seeley discussed Seeley's performance evaluation. During that conversation, which resulted in a "blowup," Yenchesky testified, Seeley said that he is a "take charge guy." Yenchesky said his response was "Yes, but you do not take the reigns out of my hands."

At about 10 p.m. Thursday, the board recessed for the night with Yenchesky being the only person who testified.

The board plans to meet again Jan. 27 and Jan. 28 to resume the hearing.

At the Jan. 24 School Board meeting, members plan to discuss the time and place for that hearing.

Jeff Seeley hearing at a glance

What's at stake: Jeff Seeley, the De Pere School District's business manager, was placed on paid administrative leave Sept. 20.

Specific reasons for why Seeley was placed on leave and why the De Pere School Board would consider not renewing his contract were not given.

Superintendent Richard Yenchesky and Seeley, along with their attorneys and witnesses, are making their cases to the School Board. The board - on a four vote majority - will make the final decision on Seeley's contract.

Board President Pamela Wilson has excused herself from the hearing. She said Tuesday that it was because Yenchesky had mentored her son, and Seeley and his attorney, Gordon McQuillen, expressed concern that the board could be biased against Seeley.

Key People: Seeley and his attorney, Gordon McQuillen, Yenchesky and his attorney, James Ruhly, School Board members John Koser, Dawn Picard, Rose Hogan, Cheryl Kalny, Suzanne Barnes and Jon Paque, and the board's attorney, Mike Julka.

What happened Tuesday: The hearing began with a four hour closed session involving the board and its attorney. The board cited a state statute to consider employment and nonrenewal issues and to confer with lawyers on those issues.

When the board returned to open session, Yenchesky said Seeley did not cooperate or follow instructions, was insubordinate and did not treat his coworkers as equals.

Yenchesky also testified that Seeley did not understand the district's budget procedure and paid an office employee a salary that Yenchesky did not authorize.

What happened Wednesday: Yenchesky continued his testimony but was not cross examined by Seeley's attorney. Yenchesky testified that Seeley ignored directions, did not understand the district's budget procedures and made unauthorized changes to the way the districts computes early retirement benefits.

Yenchesky's attorney called witnesses Janice DeMeuse and Raymond Thillman to the stand. DeMeuse is a former district employee, and Thillman, retired Luxumburg-Casco School District superintendent, was hired by the district in November on a part time basis to help with the district's budget.

What's next: The hearing is expected to continue Jan. 27 and 28. School Board members will discuss the hearing's time and places at their Jan. 24 board meeting.



Posted Jan. 19, 2001

Cost of dispute over Seeley tops \$7,500

Thousands spent on lawyer alone

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - The De Pere School District has spent at least \$7,545 since Sept. 20 to handle issues regarding the leave of the district's business manager, Jeff Seeley.

The figure reflects only what Superintendent Richard Yenchesky's lawyer Jim Ruhly was paid for the time he spent at Seeley's contract nonrenewal hearing last week and what the district paid a consultant to help with the 2001-02 budget after Seeley was placed on leave.

It does not include Seeley's annual salary of \$83,533, which he is paid while on leave; what Ruhly was paid to counsel Yenchesky about the Seeley issue prior to the hearing; and what the School Board's attorney, Michael Julka, was paid prior to and during the hearing for counsel related to Seeley and the hearing.

Yenchesky did not return calls Wednesday or Thursday, but his secretary, Janine Rasmussen, said School Board Clerk Dawn Picard receives bills directly from Julka. Picard is in Milwaukee for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards convention.

After Seeley was placed on paid leave Sept. 20, the district hired Ray Thillman, former Luxemburg-Casco School District superintendent, to help district officials work on the budget on an as-needed basis. Thillman was hired in October and has logged 18 days of work at \$250 per day for a total of \$4,500.

The district pays Ruhly, a Madison lawyer, \$145 an hour. The hearing lasted about 21 hours over three days last week, earning Ruhly \$3,045. That doesn't include travel time or paid time before and after the hearing.

Ruhly's bills to the district do not indicate exactly what each hour is billed for; so there is not a record of how much time he was paid specifically for Seeley and hearing related counsel, Rasmussen said.

The hearing will continue Jan. 27 and 28. The board is expected to see the hearing's time and place at its next meeting on Wednesday.

Even though the hearing will continue on a weekend, and Super Bowl Sunday, Margaret Keehan said she and her husband, Chuck, will attend it. They also were at the first three days of the hearing.

"We're concerned taxpayers and we want to get the correct information," Keehan said. "We want to hear both sides. From the testimony that was presented by Yenchesky and his lawyer, it does not justify placing him (Seeley) on leave."

More than 200 people turned out for the first days of the hearing Jan. 9. About 125 people attended the hearing each of the next two days.

When Seeley was placed on leave, he was not given specific reasons for his leave status or for why the School Board was considering not renewing his contract. The district hired him in June 1999.

Before that, Seeley was the business manager for the Ashwaubenon School District from 1992 until 1999.

Seeley said Thursday he doesn't want to comment on the hearing while it's ongoing.



Posted Jan. 24, 2001

Porn charge dropped against ex-district official

By Max Hokft

Former De Pere School District official Thomas Janiak says he's ready to move on with his life now that a pornography charge no longer hangs over his head.

"I had no doubt that the system would vindicate me and that I hadn't done anything wrong," Janiak said Tuesday shortly after prosecutors dropped a felony charge of possessing child pornography.

He had been set for trial Thursday. Brown County Assistant District Attorney Dana Johnson said prosecutors opted not to proceed because they felt they wouldn't be able to meet the burden of proof.

Janiak, 51, resigned his job Nov. 6 as director of technology and information services for the school district. He said he has no plans to seek a job with the district.

"The district has always been good to me, It would have been difficult for me to go back there," Janiak said.

"Life goes on. I'll find a job."

De Pere School Superintendent Richard Yenchesky said he had no comment on the case.

A 19-year-old college intern told police that when he went to Janiak's home in August to help him move, Janiak showed him a book with pictures of children involved in sex acts. Janiak also made sexual advances toward him, the man told police.

School officials investigating the incident said they later found sexually explicit entries in a school laptop computer the Janiak used.

The district later reported the incident to the sheriff's investigators.

Janiak said the book, "Show Me: A Parent and Child Book to Sex Education," is found in at least eight university libraries nationwide, including the University of Wisconsin.

"How can they have it and charge me with child pornography?" he said.

He provided prosecutors with a legal case law on the book. "I'm a librarian," he said.

Johnson said a Washington lawyer who specializes in First Amendment issues told him that the book unsuccessful litigation since it was published in the 1970s.

Janiak said he took the book from a school library where he previously worked. He kept it because he teaches adult courses and felt it was an example "of where you draw the line."

His lawyer, Royce Finne, said the book has received professional credence.

"There's enough evidence out there that it is for scientific purposes," Finne said.



Posted Feb. 8, 2001

Many De Pere parents opt for all-day kindergarten

Final phase of Seeley hearing set for Feb. 13

By Mellody E. Parchia

DE PERE - All day kindergarten and the continuation of district business manager Jeff Seeley's nonrenewal hearing were discussed at the De Pere School Board meeting Wednesday night.

The number of requests placed for all day kindergarten during the De Pere school district's 2001-02 school year surprised Rob Lennon, director of pupil services for the district.

As of Wednesday, 157 students out of the 189 registered for kindergarten so far requested the full-day program.

"That's even higher than I would have guessed," Lennon said.

Both Dickinson and Heritage Elementary schools will offer the full-day option starting this fall.

Currently, 61 full-day requests have been placed at Dickinson, and 96 have been placed at Heritage. Twenty-one students are registered for half-days at Dickinson and 10 at Heritage. One parent opted for either program.

That's approximately 83 percent of the students registered for full days and 17 percent for half-days, Lennon said.

Parents have until April 12 to decide which plan they want for their child.

School Board President Pamela Wilson asked if the requests were "curriculum driven or work driven" by parent's schedules.

Lennon said specific data had not been compiled about why more parents are choosing to enroll their children in the full day program over the half day.

He said it is probably a combination of both curriculum and parents' work schedules.

At the end of Wednesday's meeting, the final phase of the Seeley contract nonrenewal hearings were scheduled for 3:30 p.m. Feb. 13 to 15 in De Pere High School's auditorium.

The board must decide Seeley's fate by Feb. 28.



Posted Feb. 12, 2001

Seeley testimony likely this week

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Jeff Seeley is excited to testify this week for the first time in his employment contract nonrenewal hearing before the De Pere School Board.

The hearing for Seeley, the De Pere School District's business manager, resumes Tuesday in the De Pere High School auditorium. It will be the sixth day of the hearing which began Jan. 9. The hearing is expected to continue Wednesday and Thursday.

Under state law, the School Board must decide by Feb. 28 whether to renew Seeley, who was placed on paid administrative leave Sept. 21. His annual salary is \$83,533.

Seeley and his lawyer, Gordon McQuillen, have said Superintendent Richard Yenchesky doesn't want to renew Seeley's contract because the two don't get along and because Seeley has tried to correct flawed procedures in the district.

Yenchesky has testified that Seeley did not know how to do his job properly. He also testified that Seeley has not done anything illegal, such as steal from the district.

McQuillen said he will spend time rebutting testimony from Ashwaubenon School District Superintendent Jim Stillman. Seeley was the Ashwaubenon business manager from 1992 until he was hired by the De Pere district in 1999.

Stillman testified Jan. 28 that Seeley did not get along well with others in the Ashwaubenon district office.

"Stillman was being less than forthcoming," McQuillen said. "There is no foundation for some of the things he said."

Although Stillman said Seeley was not a team player, he confirmed Seeley served on several teams, such as one for teacher negotiations and one for referendums, while employed in Ashwaubenon.

McQuillen said he also will call into question a document from Seeley's Ashwaubenon personnel file. The document, a summary of one of Seeley's employment reviews, apparently was not part of Seeley's file when he left Ashwaubenon, McQuillen said.

Seeley had never seen the document until he went through the file before the hearing, McQuillen said.

The copy in Seeley's file was not signed, but Stillman's copy was. Stillman testified that he didn't know why the copy in Seeley's file was not signed.

James Ruhly, Yenchesky's lawyer, said he could call up to three more witnesses. McQuillen was not sure how many witnesses he would call.

Lawyers in the case say they hope the hearing wraps up Thursday.

"It has been exhaustive," Ruhly said. "It's been grueling for everyone who's had to sit and listen."



Posted Feb. 14, 2001

Seeley hurt office morale, secretary says

She says he was uncooperative, disrespectful

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - The secretary to the De Pere School District superintendent defended allegations that the district's business manager caused a breakdown of the office's team environment.

Janine Rasmussen, Superintendent Richard Yenchesky's secretary, testified for more than six hours Tuesday in day six of the employment contract nonrenewal hearing of Jeff Seeley, the district's business manager. The hearings began Jan. 9.

Rasmussen, who has worked for the district for about six years, affirmed testimony Yenchesky has given contending that Seeley did not cooperate with and was disrespectful to other employees in the district office.

"Before Jeff Seeley came we all felt comfortable sharing and brainstorming together to work on issues," Rasmussen said. "But after Jeff came, doors started to close. I felt like I was stepping on toes if I tried to share something I knew about past district practices."

She testified that she would leave the district if Seeley's contract is renewed.

"I would not work for this district next year if Mr. Seeley was working for the district," Rasmussen said.

Seeley has not testified, but his lawyer, Gordon McQuillen said last week that Seeley will take the stand this week.

McQuillen has said Yenchesky wants to get rid of Seeley because the two did not get along and because Seeley tried to improve flawed or outdated district practices.

Rasmussen testified that Seeley was divisive, disrespectful and demanding before he was placed on administrative leave. She said he began to cause problems in the district office shortly after he arrived in 1999. However, she testified that she did not talk with Yenchesky about her feelings about Seeley.

Rasmussen said she often prepared informational memos from Yenchesky to the School Board. In some of those memos, Yenchesky praised Seeley's performance.

McQuillen asked Rasmussen if she ever thought to tell Yenchesky that she believes Seeley caused problems in the office, and she said no.

The hearing will continue today and Thursday. According to state law, the De Pere School Board must decide by Feb. 28 whether to renew Seeley.

Seeley was placed on paid administrative leave Sept. 21. He was hired in July 1999. His salary for the 2000-01 school year is \$83,533.



Posted Feb. 15, 2001

Seeley describes encounter

He says Yenchesky cursed, threatened him

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Richard Yenchesky, the De Pere School District superintendent, verbally and physically lashed out at business manager Jeff Seeley, Seeley testified Wednesday in his nonrenewal hearing.

"He called me a f----- son of a b---- and told me that I don't do a g----- thing for him," Seeley said Wednesday during the seventh day of his employment contract nonrenewal hearing that started in January.

"He hollered that I should "turn in your f----- resignation."

"He jumped up out his chair, leaned over me and physically beat the table. He said I should watch out because he can hurt me."

The emotional encounter occurred during Seeley's performance evaluation meeting with Yenchesky May 31.

At an earlier hearing, Yenchesky testified that the encounter occurred and that he later apologized to the district office staff for his behavior.

Seeley's employment contract with the district expires June 30, and Yenchesky has recommended that the De Pere School Board not renew the contract.

According to state law, the board must decide by Feb. 28 whether to renew Seeley.

A 4-2 vote to not renew is required, or else Seeley's contract would be renewed.

Wednesday was Seeley's first time testifying during the hearing, which began Jan. 9.

Yenchesky has testified that Seeley did not cooperate with him, was disrespectful to other office staff members and did not know how to do his job. In particular, Yenchesky accused Seeley of changing district practices, including the way it calculates early retirement benefits for staff members.

However, Seeley testified Wednesday that the superintendent and the district's lawyer, James Ruhly, reviewed Seeley's calculations and did not say they were wrong. In fact, Yenchesky complimented Seeley's work, Seeley said.

After the May 31 meeting during which Yenchesky blew up, Seeley tried to work out problems and differences between the two, Seeley said.

He submitted several proposals to Yenchesky and met with Yenchesky both in the office and over lunch, Seeley said.

Seeley said Yenchesky told him he appreciated Seeley's efforts and complimented him on them. But Yenchesky refused to work with a mediator to help resolve the problems, even though School Board President Pamela Wilson suggested use of a mediator, Seeley said.

At one point Wednesday while Gordon McQuillen, Seeley's lawyer, cross-examined one of Yenchesky's witnesses, McQuillen asked that Yenchesky be admonished for his behavior during the hearing.

McQuillen said Yenchesky was making "threatening gestures" to him when he asked questions of the witness, an office secretary.

At times during the hearing, Yenchesky clenched his fists, lurched forward in his chair and laughed to himself.

Ruhly, Yenchesky's lawyer, said it is acceptable for Yenchesky and Seeley to react to questions as long as they don't disrupt the hearing.

Mike Julka, the board's lawyer and facilitator of the hearing, said he was not watching Yenchesky and asked that the hearing move forward.

At about 6 p.m., Ruhly finished his case and McQuillen asked the board to deliberate and make a decision whether to renew Seeley based on the evidence presented. McQuillen argued that Yenchesky had not met the burden of proof requirement.

Board member Jon Paque made a motion to go into closed session to deliberate, but the motion was rejected by a 3-3 vote.

Paque, Rose Hogan, and Suzanne Barnes voted to go into closed session, but John Koser, Cheryl Kalny, and Dawn Picard voted against the motion.

The hearing continues today at De Pere High School.

About Seeley

The De Pere School District hired Jeff Seeley in June 1999. His salary for the 2000-01 school year is \$83,533. Before coming to De Pere, Seeley had worked as the Ashwaubenon School District business manager since 1992.



Posted Feb. 28, 2001

De Pere board expected to rule today on Seeley

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - The fate of Jeff Seeley should come no later than 11:59 p.m. today.

The De Pere School Board, and at some points more than 100 De Pere School District residents, have sat through 10 days of public testimony in the employment contract nonrenewal hearing for Seeley, the district's business manager.

Today, board members will hold a closed meeting to decide whether to renew Seeley's contract, which expires June 30. The board will announce its decision in an open session tonight, Board Vice President John Koser said Tuesday.

A 4-2 vote from the School Board is needed to not renew Seeley. State law requires the board to make a decision by the end of February.

Superintendent Richard Yenchesky has recommended that Seeley's contract not be renewed because Seeley did not obey Yenchesky's orders and did not do his job properly.

Seeley has maintained that Yenchesky merely did not like Seeley and was angry because Seeley tried to correct flawed and outdated district practices.

During testimony Tuesday, Jackie Nystrom, the district's former human resources coordinator, backed Seeley's previous testimony that Yenchesky yelled profanity at Seeley during Seeley's performance evaluation last May 31.

Nystrom testified that she heard Yenchesky call Seeley a "f----- son of a b----" and told Seeley to turn in his "f----- resignation." She said she also heard pounding in Yenchesky's office, which was next to hers.

She also said she heard Seeley say "Dick, this is so unfair," and "I want to be treated like everyone else." The exchange made Nystrom so uncomfortable that she left her office and did not return until it ended, Nystrom testified.

Nystrom also testified to issues regarding a memorandum added to the district's support staff contract and a change in the way the district calculates early retirement benefits.

Regarding the calculation of early retirement benefits, Yenchesky testified that Seeley changed the calculation without Yenchesky's approval. However, Nystrom testified that Yenchesky approved the letters to the retirees and did not question the calculation used to arrive at the benefits.



Posted Mar. 1, 2001

Board votes 4-2 not to renew Seeley's contract

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - After hours of deliberation and days of testimony, the De Pere School Board decided at about 11:45 p.m. Wednesday not to renew the contract of business manager Jeff Seeley.

In a 4-2 vote, members voting not to renew his contract were John Koser, Cheryl Kalny, Rose Hogan and Dawn Picard. The two supporters of Seeley were Jon Paque and Suzanne Barnes.

"It's probably one of the hardest decisions this board will ever have to make," Koser, the board vice president said afterward. "There will be a very long healing process that we'll have to go through."

Neither Seeley nor Superintendent Richard Yenchesky would comment on the 11th hour vote.

Yenchesky placed Seeley on administrative leave last fall.

Seeley will remain on paid administrative leave until his contract expires June 30. He will make about \$83,500 for the 2000-01 school year. He came to the De Pere School District in July 1999. Before that he worked in the Ashwaubenon School District.

Seeley requested that his nonrenewal hearing before the School Board be held in a public forum.

During the recent nonrenewal hearings, Ashwaubenon Superintendent Jim Stillman testified that he would not re-hire Seeley, if given the chance.

Seeley worked in the Ashwaubenon School District for about seven years as its business manager.

After the vote was announced in the De Pere High School Auditorium, about 20 spectators went up to Seeley to express their support.

"I'm really disappointed," said De Pere resident Margaret Keehan. "What I heard during the testimony I thought was pretty obvious that he (Seeley) was an added plus to the district office."

"I don't know if the School Board did their job. They're going to have some bigger issues ahead."

Keehan added that Wednesday's decision is not the final word on the matter for many school district residents. She did not elaborate.

"We appreciate that Jeff was brave enough to take it this far," Keehan said, alluding to Seeley's intention to have a public hearing.

Before the decision came, resident Carol Dean said she supported the move to have Seeley's hearing before the public.

"This was truly the only fair way to regain Jeff Seeley's credibility," Dean said at about 8:30 p.m. while the board met behind closed doors.

Dean attended most of the 10 hearings, which began in January.

At about 8 p.m. Wednesday, the board went into closed session to discuss Seeley's fate. More than 60 people waited in the auditorium for a decision.

State law required a decision by the end of February.

Lawyers on both sides of the case gave closing arguments to the board Wednesday evening.

James Ruhly, Yenchesky's lawyer, reminded the board of reasons to recommending Seeley's ouster.

Ruhly said the superintendent's main concerns were Seeley's negative impact on the work environment in the district administrative office, Seeley's failure to understand how to manage the district's operating budget, and Seeley's unwillingness to cooperate with the superintendent, who has 17 years experience.

Rockland resident Paul Schmitz attended all the hearings. He believes the School Board owed it to Seeley to have the hearings in public instead of being closed doors.

"Before the hearing, I was more on less on Jeff's side," Schmitz said Wednesday evening. "Then I was undecided after the first day or two. Now, I'm back on Jeff's side. They haven't brought anything out that doesn't justify renewing his contract."

In his closing arguments, Gordon McQuillen, the lawyer for Seeley, maintained that his client was never given reason for his dismissal until the hearings began.

"It would have been helpful from the outset to tell us what the reasons were that Mr. Yenchesky was seeking a nonrenewal of Mr. Seeley's contract," McQuillen said.



Posted Mar. 2, 2001

Seeley case legal fees near \$70,000

Despite cost some say hearing was necessary

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - When the tab is closed out, the Jeff Seeley hearing could end up costing De Pere School District taxpayers about \$70,000 or more in legal fees.

The contract nonrenewal hearing for Seeley, the district's business manager, began Jan. 9 and lasted 11 days. It ended late Wednesday night with a De Pere School Board vote of 4-2 to not renew Seeley's contract, which expires June 30.

"This was not a good time for anybody," Superintendent Richard Yenchesky said Thursday.

"We did everything we could to avoid it." Yenchesky refused to say what he did to avoid the hearing, which was open to the public.

Yenchesky said he is preparing a job posting for the business manager position.

Seeley did not return a call from the Green Bay Press Gazette seeking comment Thursday.

Board members Rose Hogan, Cheryl Kalny, John Koser and Dawn Picard voted to not renew Seeley. Jon Paque and Suzanne Barnes voted in support of Seeley.

"What we did do was in the best interests of the school district," said Koser, board vice president. He declined to comment on his vote, saying it would not be appropriate.

Board President Pamela Wilson excused herself from the hearing because Yenchesky has mentored her son.

Despite the cost of the hearing and the length of time it took, some district residents say the hearing was necessary.

"This was unfortunate but it had to happen," Morrison resident Franklin Falck said. "It sure brought out some negatives and positives from both sides, and it definitely showed things that should not happen a district office."

Falck said he did not favor one side over the other.

During the hearing, Yenchesky testified that Seeley made demeaning comments to other office employees, did not cooperate with Yenchesky and did not know how to handle the district budget.

Seeley denied the allegations and testified that Yenchesky felt threatened by him because Seeley corrected flawed and outdated district procedures.

He also testified that Yenchesky used profanity and lashed out violently at him during his employment evaluation in May. Yenchesky admitted during testimony that the incident occurred.

District records indicate that through the end of January, James Ruhly, the lawyer for Yenchesky, made \$25,053 for legal services and other expenses related to Seeley's hearing. The district pays Ruhly \$145 an hour.

Mike Julka, the board's lawyer, made more than \$26,000 in legal fees through the end of January, Picard, the board's clerk, estimated Thursday. The amount does not include travel and other expenses, she said. Julka makes \$180 an hour.

Both lawyers' offices are in Madison.

The hearing continued for six days in February, each lasting about 8 1/2 hours. That could mean at least \$9,200 more for Julka and \$7,400 for Ruhly just in legal fees accrued specifically during the hearing.

The figures do not include hearing related counsel given on days when the hearing wasn't taking place or other expenses such as travel.

School Board members did not get extra pay for attending the hearing, Picard said.

In October, the De Pere Education Association, the union representing the district's teachers and support staff, indicated that it was considering a vote of no-confidence in Yenchesky.

"During the reign of the current superintendent, the workplace environment has deteriorated from a relaxed, friendly, family environment to one of fear and hostility," said a letter issued in October by the union's Executive Committee.

On Thursday, union president Randy Soquet said Seeley's nonrenewal and the possibility of a no-confidence vote could come up at the union's Executive Council meeting Monday. He declined to comment further.

Jeff Seeley's status

Jeff Seeley was placed on paid administrative leave in September by the De Pere School District and will remain on paid leave until his contract expires. His salary for the 2000-01 school year is \$83,533

He began working for the De Pere School District in July 1999. Before going to De Pere he was the business manager for the Ashwaubenon School District.



Posted Mar. 3, 2001

Seeley says he offered to resign

School Board VP says he doesn't recall offer

By Heather Stur

DE PERE - Jeff Seeley said Friday that he offered to end his employment contract nonrenewal hearing the day it started, but the De Pere School Board rejected his settlement offer.

Seeley, the ousted De Pere School District business manager, said he asked the De Pere School Board back in January to pay him about \$10,000 to cover his legal fees and renew his contract for one year, with the condition that Seeley would find another job as soon as possible and resign.

"We made it for the good of the community," Seeley said of the offer. "It truly would have minimized the impact on the district, politically and financially."

On Wednesday, the board voted 4-2 to not renew Seeley's contract, which expires June 30. The hearing lasted 11 days - spread out over about two months - and cost the district more than \$70,000 in legal fees.

De Pere School District Superintendent Richard Yenchesky said Friday that he was not involved in the settlement negotiations.

However, he said the board asked him if he thought it would be appropriate to settle, and he replied. "You gotta do what you gotta do."

"I didn't encourage or discourage them," Yenchesky said.

Board Vice President John Koser said Friday that while the board and Seeley made various settlement offers throughout the hearing, he did not recall any offer in which Seeley would resign once he found a new job.

Koser would not talk specifics of settlement offers, which were discussed in closed sessions.

Yenchesky has said he did all he could to avoid the hearing to decide whether to renew Seeley's employment contract with the district.

On Friday, Yenchesky maintained that he had been available to discuss Seeley's options with the district.

But, "if they were truly trying to resolve this, they could've let me leave on my own rather than placing me on leave," Seeley said.

Yenchesky placed Seeley on paid administrative leave in September.

Yenchesky said he did so because he believed Seeley's presence in the office was disruptive.

Seeley will remain on paid leave until the end of his contract, which is June 30.

His salary for the 2000-01 school year is \$83,533.

Seeley is unsure what's next in his career.

"I'm just trying to pick up the pieces," he said. "I have to assess how much damage this hearing has cost my reputation. I'm trained to work in public education, but this will limit my opportunities. To what degree, I don't know."

Despite the outcome of the hearing, Seeley said he is grateful to the support school district residents showed him throughout the hearing.

At times, more than 100 spectators came to the De Pere High School auditorium to witness the proceedings.

"My wife and I were touched by all the support the De Pere community showed us," Seeley said.

The hearing

During the hearing, De Pere School District Superintendent Richard Yenchesky testified that Jeff Seeley mishandled the district's budget, made unauthorized changes to district procedures and did not get along with district central office staff.

Seeley testified that he corrected flawed and outdated procedures, causing Yenchesky to feel threatened. Testimony, including a rehashing of Seeley's employment evaluation during which Yenchesky yelled profanities at Seeley and pounded a desk, from both Seeley and Yenchesky brought to light Yenchesky's sometimes volatile behavior.



Posted Mar. 15, 2001

District hears complaints about Yenchesky

By Mellody E. Parchia

DE PERE - Nearly 50 people attended the De Pere School Board Meeting Wednesday as a result of the board's recent decision not to renew the contract of the former business administrator, Jeff Seeley.

During the 15 minutes allowed for public comment, members of a newly formed citizen coalition called Voters for Quality Education voiced their displeasure over the outcome of the Seeley hearings and what they learned about Seeley's and Superintendent Richard Yenchesky's poor working relationship.

"I would support action on the part of this board to terminate, suspend or otherwise restrict Mr. Yenchesky's authority at this time pending further discussion," said Charles Keehan of the voter's group.

Keehan also presented a written statement on behalf of the group.

Keehan clarified he has not calling for the resignation of the superintendent but was letting board members know they had support if they chose to do so.

When asked if he had reason to believe that some members of the board wanted Yenchesky removed from his position, he said yes.

"We think there is support on the board for dismissal, but I know for a fact some would never even think of it," he said.

Pamela Wilson, School Board president, responded by asking the residents to specify their grievances against Yenchesky in letter form and then submit them to the board for review.

"We are not necessarily making a decision on the contract because it's not up until 2002," she said. "If we made a decision, it would be on the extension of that contract."

Wilson also stated there are procedures the board must follow in regard to nonrenewal or requests for resignation. She offered residents a copy of those School Board policies.

Rose Hogan, Cheryl Kalny, John Koser and Dawn Picard voted Feb. 28 not to renew the former business administrator's contract.

John Paque and Suzanne Barnes voted against not renewing Seeley's contract.

*The board also heard Wednesday that opening and staffing the intermediate school and program expansions are estimated to cost the district \$2.2 million.

The district will try to pare the cost to \$2 million, said Rob Lennon, director of pupil services.



Posted Mar. 28, 2001

Forum draws personal answers from school board hopefuls

By Mellody E. Parchia

DE PERE - Phyllis Kornowske was pleased and a little surprised with the way candidates for the De Pere School Board answered questions at the League of Women Voters Candidate Forum Tuesday.

"I though it was excellent," Kornowske said. "They gave some really personal answers to what they think the future of the district should be."

Steve Broniarczyk, Suse Renke Riddle, William Van Book and incumbents Rose Hogan and Cheryl Kalny are running for three open seats in the election on Tuesday. The positions hold three year terms and come with a yearly salary of \$2,050.

The board hopefuls addressed questions penned by some of the nearly 50 in attendance.

"How will you renew confidence in the School Board in light of the (Jeff) Seeley nonrenewal hearings and no-confidence vote pending on the superintendent? spurred varied responses.

Last month, the board voted not to renew the administrative contract of Jeff Seeley, who served as the district's business manager.

"What has this board done not to deserve the trust and confidence of the people in this district? said Kalny, who has served one term on the board.

She said board members made the "best" decision for the district by not renewing Seeley's contract.

"It may have not been the decisions that some people wanted, were pushing for or expected," she said.

Broniarczyk had a different take.

"As a board, we need to go out and listen to the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) presidents, to the members of the community, so we can improve in what (they) see as shortcomings on the board."

The question, "what is your opinion on the Yenchesky matter," gathered careful responses from candidates.

After hearing the question, Kalny asked what was the Yenchesky matter.

Richard Yenchesky has been the De Pere School District Superintendent for more than 17 years.

"The board needs to make very clear expectations with the administrator as far as performance and operations within the district, and then measure," Van Beek said.

Hogan, who asked Yenchesky to resign March 15, said, "It will be up to the board as to the length and longevity of Mr. Yenchesky's contract."



Posted Mar. 29, 2001

Educators lose faith in Yenchesky

By Mellody E. Parchia

DE PERE - Members of the De Pere Education Association and De Pere Educational Support Personnel Association said they have no confidence in Superintendent Richard Yenchesky's "ability to continue as (their) district administrator," Randy Soquet said at the School Board meeting Wednesday.

Soquet is the president of the DPEA, a union composed of district teachers. The other organization is a union of support staff such as custodians, kitchen aids and secretaries, said Shirley Gussart, the organization's president.

The groups' statement said a leader of a "quality educational environment" should be "respected and credible," act "in a respectful and compassionate manner when dealing with people and issues," and promote and maintain "an educational environment that is free of fear."

The groups don't feel Yenchesky lives up to these standards.

Neither do members of Voters for Quality Education, a citizen coalition formed during the Jeff Seeley nonrenewal hearings, who shared some of the unions' concerns but also have their own.

Roy Simonson, a representative of Voters for Quality Education, also read from a prepared statement. Simonson is the director of public works for the city of De Pere.

"We believe that our tax dollars are being handled inappropriately," Simonson stated. "We believe that the district office management is not productive. We believe our district administrator has cast the district in a negative light."

The coalition asked the board to investigate its concerns, to respond in writing and to "hold the district administrator accountable for his actions, or lack thereof."

A great deal of discontent is a result of the board's 4-2 decision last month not to renew the contract of Seeley, the former district business administrator. During nonrenewal hearings, Yenchesky admitted that he had a confrontation with Seeley where he used profanity and threatened Seeley.

Yenchesky was not present Wednesday.

"That was his personal decision," board President Pam Wilson said.

Yenchesky typically attends the board meetings.

Jim Golembeski, a leading member of Voters for Quality Education, said he was disappointed by Yenchesky's absence.

"I think the teachers, support staff and public, spoke strongly and pretty clearly that we have a big problem," he said.



Posted Apr. 12, 2001

De Pere board cites administrative, business concerns

By Mellody Parchia

DE PERE - Administrative and business concerns were two of many issues identified by De Pere School Board members Wednesday as high priorities.

At the meeting, board members individually wrote what they felt are the top issues facing the district.

Members reflected on personal sentiments as well as concerns voiced by residents.

Board members allowed newly elected member William Van Beek to unofficially participate in the process.

Another new member, Suse Reinke Riddle, was absent at the beginning of the ranking process, but returned to the meeting later.

School Board President Pamela Wilson gave her definition of the two main responsibilities of school board members.

"Children and the budget are the focal points that most decisions are based upon," Wilson said.

Board members posted their concerns under various categories. Administrative issues received the most votes.

Business issues were second, followed by school board matters. Curriculum / academic programs were next.

District and public communications rounded out the top five.

Wilson asked fellow members to identify resources they believe are needed to deal with those issues.

Board Clerk Dawn Picard suggested the panel seek legal advice from attorney Mike Julka regarding contract issues and specifically address concerns about the district administrator; Superintendent Richard Yenchesky.

Yenchesky has been under fire in the aftermath of the board's decision to oust business manager Jeff Seeley following several weeks of testimony.

The De Pere Education Association, the district's teachers union, said March 28 it had no confidence in Yenchesky's abilities to lead the district anymore.

A citizens coalition, which backed two candidates in the April 3 election, does not support the long time superintendent.

The board voted to use Julka's services even though he is not the board's attorney.

During the meeting, resident Theresa Simonson said, "I'm sure board members are more comfortable writing on post-its as opposed to sharing verbally their concerns, and I have no doubt that will come later."

Wilson said results of Wednesday's issue identification process will be available for the public's review at a later date.



Posted Jun. 13, 2001

Still no confidence in Yenchesky

DPEA favors immediate removal

By Mellody E. Parchia

DE PERE - The De Pere Education Association Representative Council Tuesday reiterated its March 28 no-confidence vote in Superintendent Richard Yenchesky's ability to lead the district.

"We continue to support his immediate removal from his current position," the council said in a statement.

Yenchesky said he was unaware of the statement.

"I don't have any intention of resigning," Yenchesky said.

Randy Soquet, DPEA president, said the council wanted to remind the new School Board of its lack of confidence in the superintendent.

"I think it's a good move, because, I think there is so much fear and a threatening atmosphere," said Cathy Huppert, who taught in the district for 28 1/2 years before retiring.

Yenchesky said he never understood the original no-confidence vote, because teachers reported the "direct opposite," in an anonymous survey given a year and a half ago.

"Propaganda, things taken out of context, untruths and mistruths," he said, have led teachers to change their opinion of his ability to lead. He did not answer when asked if he thought he is still capable of leading the district.

The former School Board's Feb. 28 decision not to renew the contract of former business manager Jeff Seeley led, to the union's votes of no-confidence and concerns by a citizens coalition called Voters for Quality Education.

During three days of hearings, Yenchesky and Seeley both testified they had a poor working relationship, Seeley said. Yenchesky cursed at him, Yenchesky later apologized.

Seeley has since been hired as business manager for the Winona School District in Winona, Minn.

"This (no-confidence vote) is not about my inexcusable use of an inappropriate word," said Yenchesky, whose contract expires in 2002. "It is not the case of the nonrenewal of Mr. Seeley. This is an emphatic ploy by the union to discredit (me)."

"I inherited a contemptuous union when I arrived in 1984," he said, referring to a letter a former superintendent wrote, alleging problems with a former leading union representative.

Donna Osen, another retired teacher, emphasized she had no personal problems with Yenchesky, but said "he didn't have a very close relationship with the teachers."



Posted Jun. 17, 2001

De Pere School District "tumult" costs it two staffers

By Mellody E. Parchia

DE PERE - One administrator has left the De Pere School District and one could be released from his contract; but neither said they blame Superintendent Richard Yenchesky for their departure.

Rich Neuenfeldt, director of curriculum and instruction, said he has a positive working relationship with Yenchesky.

He said he's leaving for an unspecified reason.

"But I wouldn't be honest if I didn't say the tumult in the district wasn't part of it."

Neuenfeldt begins his job as the supervisor of fine arts for the La Crosse School District on July 6. In his new role, Neuenfeldt, a former music teacher, will work with music, art and theater teachers.

The De Pere School Board will vote Monday on whether to release him from his contract.

De Pere administrators' contracts have two year "roll over" provisions, said Yenchesky. In essence, they have two year contracts that are automatically renewed at the end of each school year, he said.

"It's within the board's right to say no, but usually they don't do that because people move on for a reason," said Neuenfeldt, who has worked four years in the district.

Another administrator, Brad Juedes, former district building and ground supervisor, resigned three weeks ago after five months on the job.

He said he couldn't pin his departure on one person or incident. "Is it a bad situation there? Yes, he said.

The position has been filled by Pat Meyer, who held the job before Juedes.

"De Pere is an incredible place, and it hurts me to see the staff, who I'm so fond of, and the district administrator, who has treated me so well, at odds with each other," Neuenfeldt said.

Last Tuesday, the De Pere Education Association's Representative Council reiterated a March 28 vote of no confidence in Yenchesky's ability to lead the district. The vote came after problems between Yenchesky and the former business manager, Jeff Seeley, were revealed during a three-day contract nonrenewal hearing. De Pere is looking for a new business manager.

Seeley now works for the Winona (Minn.) School District. "We're so diverted by this we're not paying enough attention to kids and learning, and I don't see an immediate end in sight to this and that's tragic," Neuenfeldt said.



Green Bay Weather



OPINION

Posted June 21, 2001

Editorial: It's time for answers in Yenchesky controversy

We can understand the deliberate pace at which the De Pere School Board is proceeding in reviewing the contract of long-time Superintendent Richard Yenchesky.

Deciding the future of the school district's top administrator is serious business.

Yenchesky has done some good things in De Pere, and that must be considered, along with his recent difficulties.

But the board ultimately must make its decision based on what is best for the children of the school district.

We urge the School Board to reach a conclusion before the start of the new school year. That will allow the staff and community to focus on what's going on in the classroom, rather than what's going on in the board room.

The De Pere School District long has had an excellent reputation for academic quality. There is no outward indication that the recent controversy involving Yenchesky, former business manager Jeff Seeley and the administration of the district has tarnished that reputation.

But some school district residents are scratching their heads and wondering what the heck is going on. Sides are forming, which can be unhealthy if the cause of that divisiveness is not addressed.

Recent events include:

- Seeley's contract nonrenewal. A split board took that decision after a lengthy hearing process that revealed problems in the district's central office. Seeley has since taken a job in another state, and the district is reviewing applications for a replacement.
- Significant changes on the School Board. Staunch Yenchesky defender Cheryl Kalny was defeated in the April election, while Rose Hogan, who sought Yenchesky's resignation, was returned to the board. Two candidates backed by an anti-Yenchesky citizens group also were elected, and Yenchesky critic Jon Paque later was elected board president.
- Two votes of no confidence in Yenchesky by the Representative Council of the De Pere Education Association. "We continue to support his immediate removal from his current position," the council said in its most recent statement.
- The departure of administrators Rick Neuenfeldt and Brad Juedes. Neither targeted Yenchesky as the reason for their leaving, but both said the turmoil in the district was a factor.

Issue

De Pere School Board has been holding closed sessions regarding superintendent's contract

Our view

District's residents have been kept in the dark long enough; it's time to make a decision and move on

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Since April 26, the day after the new board took office, at least five closed sessions have been held regarding Yenchesky's contract.

The board is within its rights under the state's Open Meetings Law to discuss personnel matters in secret. But, soon, the board will owe the community an explanation of what is going on behind closed doors.

Is it negotiating with Yenchesky to buy out the remaining year of his contract? Is it trying to convince him to retire? Is it attempting to renegotiate certain terms of his contract? Is it setting guidelines that will allow him to continue? Is it researching whether it has enough evidence to fire him?

We don't know. Neither do residents of the school district. And those are the people who pay the bills to operate the schools in which the district's children are educated.

The school board must make a decision that is legally grounded and in the best interests of the district. But it also must realize that the longer it takes, the more the controversy festers.

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Posted July 7, 2001

Yenchesky to receive \$325,000

Amount will be paid out in two installments

By Mellody E. Parchia

DE PERE - The De Pere School District will pay former superintendent Richard Yenchesky \$325,000 - before taxes - to buy out his contract, according to a mutual separation agreement released Friday.

Yenchesky, who held the job for 17 years, had an annual salary of nearly \$107,000. He had one year left on his contract, which was set to expire in June 2002.

Board attorney Mike Julka said the \$325,000 includes:

- * Yenchesky's 2001-02 salary - nearly \$110,000, plus benefits, the amount of which was unavailable.
- * About \$100,000 in retirement benefits.
- * A "negotiated add-on stipend." That amount also was unavailable from the district.
- * A supplement to the funds he would have received from the Wisconsin Retirement System if he had stayed with the district until the end of his contract. Because Yenchesky did not retire, his benefits from the state retirement system were reduced. The district will pay an amount equivalent to the difference.

According to this agreement, the board will make two payments of \$162,500 to Yenchesky, one by Aug. 31 of this year and the second by Aug. 31, 2002. The district also must pay attorney fees related to the agreement. The amount has not been determined.

The De Pere School Board approved the agreement in a 5-2 vote June 28, ending months of controversy over Yenchesky's ability to lead the district.

"The district administrator and the board recognize that recent events make maintaining the status quo extremely difficult. As a result, the two parties have come to a mutual separation agreement," said a joint statement by the board and Yenchesky.

"We explored many, many options. This was the best thing for the district at this time," said Suse Riddle, a School Board member who voted for the agreement along with William Van Beek, Rose Hogan, board President Jon Paque and Suzanne Barnes.

Board members Pam Wilson and Dawn Picard voted against the agreement.

"My personal feeling is that timing was very important and that we needed to move ahead in a timely way to seek the kind of leadership the district needs," Riddle said.

The board's Human Resource Committee is studying search firms that could help find both an interim and permanent superintendent for the 2,700 student district. Rob Lennon, district director of pupil services, is serving as acting superintendent until an interim superintendent is hired.

That the board chose to buy out Yenchesky's contract is not surprising to Ken Cole, executive director of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards.

"Rather than go through the divisions of people forming sides on who does and who doesn't like the superintendent, some think it's less expensive in terms of bad publicity and attorney fees to buy the contract out," Cole said. "It causes a greater dilemma in smaller districts because they have fewer dollars available to them."

Cole said the De Pere board's settlement is in the "medium" range. "It's neither high nor low" compared to other districts its size.

"If you can't demonstrate those types of things like immorality, or inability, then the court will order the contract paid out in full," Cole said.

The agreement prohibits Yenchesky, 63, from filing an age-discrimination suit against the district.

"We couldn't ask him to retire. No one can do that under law," Paque said.

Paul Davis, general counsel for the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission, said "when you decide if you want to buy out a contract and how much you want to pay ... age discrimination ... would be part of the picture," David said. How high a part would depend on how valid are any other reasons for wanting this individual to be removed from his or her position."

The decision to separate came after months of turmoil in the district regarding Yenchesky's administrative abilities.

Problems with the district came to light in February during a contract nonrenewal hearing for former business manager Jeff Seeley.

In March the De Pere Education Association, the teachers union, said it had no confidence in Yenchesky's ability to lead the district. The group's representative council reiterated the vote of no-confidence in June.

Other provisions included in the separation agreement:

- * Yenchesky's name will appear on commemorative plaques at De Pere High School, the new intermediate school and Dickinson Elementary School. Yenchesky was highly involved in a \$29.4 million successful referendum that included the building projects, Paque said.

- * Neither party admits to any wrongdoing nor fault, nor do they acknowledge any violation of contract or law.

- * Yenchesky and the district agree not to commence and legal action against each other relating to

Yenchesky's employment by the district.

* Yenchesky may provide 30 hours of annual district service between July 1 of this year and June 30, 2002.

The district service man include consulting and advise regarding the building projects, insurance or other "outstanding items that were on his desk," Paque said.

Joint statement - Unified School District of De Pere / District Administrator Richard Yenchesky

The Board of Education of the Unified School District of De Pere and District Administrator, Richard Yenchesky, have reached and agreement of separation regarding his employment with the District.

The District Administrator and the Board recognize that recent events make maintaining the status quo extremely difficult. As a result, the two parties have come to a mutual agreement of separation, effective June 30, 2001.

The Board of Education affirms that over the past seventeen (17) years of service to the District, Mr. Yenchesky has greatly contributed to many District accomplishments including development of a healthy financial position; assembly of a fine group of district staff; improvement in curriculum, instruction and staff development; increased student achievement; and the passage and construction of \$54 million in new and renovated facilities and technology. The Board of Education expresses its appreciation to Mr. Richard Yenchesky for his many contributions and wishes him the best in his future endeavors. Mr. Yenchesky wishes the district continued success in the pursuit of educational excellence.



Posted July 11, 2001

Yenchesky departure viewed as a relief

By Mellody E. Parchia

DE PERE - Monetary costs to the De Pere School District from the buyout of former Superintendent Richard Yenchesky's contract may be less than costs to district morale had he stayed, some district residents and officials say.

Yenchesky, the 17 year superintendent, and the board agreed mutually June 28 to separate. According to the separation agreement, the district will pay Yenchesky \$325,000 in two installments of \$162,500.

"I don't see any problem in giving him that money," said Ann Geurts, member of Voters for Quality Education. "The majority of the opinion is they don't care what it costs, just so that he's gone."

The breakdown of the \$325,000, released Tuesday by the School Board Clerk Rose Hogan and other representatives is:

- * \$110,000 - what Yenchesky's salary was expected to be during the 2001-02 school year.
- * \$100,000 - district retirement benefits.
- * \$39,000 - 35 percent of what Yenchesky would have received in life health, dental and other insurance benefits had he continued his position.
- * \$34,000 - supplement to funds he would of received from the Wisconsin Retirement System if he had stayed with the district until the end of his contract.
- * \$42,000 - extra sum, or add-on stipend.

Attorney fees must also be paid but have yet to be tabulated. Board Attorney Mike Julka's hourly rate was \$185, he said. Expenses for his travel - his office is in Madison were half that rate, he said.

Since the \$325,000 will be paid from a fund balance - a surplus of money saved over time - district residents will not have to pay any additional taxes toward the buyout, School Board President Jon Paque, said.

The money could have been used for other district needs, said Paque, who called it "opportunity - lost money."

But Paque said long standing district problems, even before problems with Yenchesky and former business manager Jeff Seeley were revealed, cost the district in ways other than the separation settlement alone.

He said some problems "are not attributable to Jeff Seeley but were existent before he even arrived at the scene."

Paque said that before Seeley held the business manager post, the district lost another business manager and other employees due to tensions. As a result, some work that needed to get done during that time, such as grant writing, did not get done, he said.

"One of my goals as an individual board member was to put an end to the adversarial relations that have been in the district for a long time and the animosity that existed between various factions," Paque said.

Richard A. Huxford, who was on the board for four years until 1998, said he thought complaints against Yenchesky were blown out of proportion, but "from what I know it's (Yenchesky's leaving) probably going to be the best for both (the board and Yenchesky)."

"The bigger picture is the kids, not the teachers, not the board," he said.



Posted Aug. 27, 2001

De Pere increases school budget 19%

Funds help cover costs of new school

By Kelley Bruss

DE PERE - A 19 percent increase in the De Pere School District's annual budget is due largely to costs for opening and staffing, a new school.

The increases will be accommodated largely by property tax increases that are within the boundaries of what district leaders promised taxpayers before the approved a \$29.3 million referendum in 2000.

"The budget won't be finalized ... until October," School Board President Jon Paque said. "But the way it's shaping up, I think we're real pleased."

The public will have a chance to talk about the preliminary 2001-02 budget - \$21,464,868 - at a hearing today. Board members then will vote on adopting that budget. A final budget will be approved after actual figures replace projections for enrollment, state aid and district property values.

The budget is about \$3.5 million more than last year. The majority of that increase is for reopening the old middle school as a remodeled intermediate school. While the remodeling and construction were included in last year's referendum, the operating budget has to include money for staffing and running the building.

The district added 45 positions in the 2001-02 budget.

John Smith, acting business manager for the district, said figuring out the budget would have been tricky if not for the \$1.5 million the district was allowed to exceed its revenue limit. Taxpayers approved that additional money in the 2000 referendum.

"We'd have to make some drastic changes without that," Smith said.

The total tax levy for the new school year is expected to be \$11.5 million. Most of the rest of the budget will come from state aid.

The levy is the amount of money districts collect through property taxes. The levy is up about \$2 million from last year. Part of the increase is for paying off debts, which increased when the 2000 referendum money was borrowed.

The projected equalized tax rate is \$12.27 per \$1,000 of equalized property value. Tax bills are based on assessed value, not equalized, so actual rates will vary by municipality within the school district.

The equalized rate will be about \$1.50 more than last year's rate of \$10.76. Administrators said in 2000 that the highest year of impact of both referendum questions - building and exceeding revenue caps - wouldn't exceed \$3 on the tax rate.

Paque said the budget may not fund every extra thing people wanted.

"It is a very conservative budget ...but I think we've got the basics down, the essentials," he said.



Posted Aug. 28, 2001

Ashwaubenon rejects Seeley's claim

District move sets stage for legal action

By Terry Anderson

ASHWAUBENON - The Ashwaubenon School District says there is no merit to a damage claim by former business manager Jeff Seeley that seeks \$600,000 and reinstatement to a post in the De Pere School District.

In an notice of claim that was filed in later June, Seeley claimed that "false and defamatory testimony" from Ashwaubenon Superintendent Jim Stillman led the De Pere School District to not renew Seeley's contract.

On Monday, the Ashwaubenon School Board, acting on the advise of its insurance agent, Wausau Insurance Cos., unanimously rejected Seeley's claim. That decision sets the stage for Seeley to bring legal action against Stillman, the School Board and the Ashwaubenon School District.

"We do not find any negligence on the part of the Ashwaubenon School District or any of their employees," Mark Cumberland, a senior claims adjuster for Wausau Insurance, stated in a letter to a school district.

A year ago, former De Pere Superintendent Richard Yenchesky placed Seeley on administrative leave, claiming Seeley created a negative work environment in the administrative office, failed to properly manage the district's operating budget and was unwilling to cooperate with Yenchesky.

Seeley requested that his nonrenewal hearing be held in public and the subsequent hearings bitterly divided the school community. The resulting furor was a major factor in a no confidence vote against Yenchesky.

During those hearing, Stillman, testified that he would not rehire Seeley if given the opportunity. Seeley had worked for seven years in the Ashwaubenon School District.

Board member Mike Sluss said Monday that during the De Pere hearings he received a phone call from Seeley, who implied that a lawsuit would follow if the board, "didn't mind it's p's and q's."

The claim, filed by the Madison based firm of Cullen, Weston, Pines, and Bach of Madison. states that Seeley said he will also be filing a lawsuit against the De Pere School District to seek reinstatement to his position there. Also, Seeley will ask for damages that include loss of income, legal fees, "and other damages as may be available in any forum in which he commences litigation."

The claim, estimates the damages at \$600,000 to this date, including \$400,000 in loss of income and benefits, \$100,000 in attorney fees and \$100,000 in other damages.



Posted Sep. 7, 2001

De Pere district finds interim superintendent

Permanent hire expected by January

By Jose De Jesus

DE PERE - The De Pere School District will finalize an agreement next week to have a retired Neenah educator serve as the district's interim superintendent.

School Board President Jon Paque said Rick Carlson has been chosen to fill the role of interim superintendent until a permanent replacement for former Superintendent Richard Yenchesky is hired.

Carlson, who retired from the Neenah School District in June 2000, will start full-time Monday. He served as principal of Ashwaubenon High School from 1974 to 1977.

"We need someone to fill in and assist us," Paque said.

Carlson was not available for comment Thursday.

Yenchesky, a 17 year superintendent, left in June as the result of a mutual separation agreement. Yenchesky and the district had been embroiled in a legal battle with the former business administrator since last September.

Paque said the district hopes to have a permanent superintendent by January. The School Board has hired Educational Consulting Services to assist in the search.

In the meantime, some of Carlson's responsibilities will include following up with the district's building projects and implementing its budget.

The district is completing work approved by voters in a \$29.3 million referendum in 2000 to remodel Dickinson Elementary School, the old middle school, and the high school.

"We don't want someone to come up with (a) new initiative, because it's not going to get finished," Paque said.

He said the board felt comfortable with Carlson, who Paque described as a person of high integrity, who has a good sense of humor, is competent and empowers his staff.

"Carlson is a very respectable man in his field," said board member Dawn Picard. "We had a strong advocate for students in the past and we want someone who can take care of the students first."



Posted Oct. 5, 2001

De Pere School Board denies Seeley's claim

The De Pere School District had denied a claim for \$600,000 filed by former business manager Jeff Seeley.

After a closed session Wednesday, the board unanimously decided to deny the claim, said Rick Carlson, De Pere's interim superintendent.

Seeley and his working relationship with former Superintendent Richard Yenchesky became the focus of a drawn-out public hearing earlier this year that resulted in Seeley's contract not being renewed.

In the months following the hearing, Yenchesky and the district agreed to a mutual separation, and he left the district after 17 years.

Carlson said Seeley's claims included \$100,000 in attorney fees, \$400,000 in loss of income and benefits, and \$100,000 in other damages. Carlson and board President Jon Paque refused to release other information about the claim.

Carlson said Seeley has six months to pursue the claim through the legal system in the form of a lawsuit.

Seeley, who now works in Winona's school district in Winona, Minn., couldn't be reached for comment Thursday.



Posted Jan. 3, 2002

Yenchesky seeks seat on board

Ex - De Pere superintendent to run for schools position

By Jose De Jesus

DE PERE - Six months after agreeing to part ways with the De Pere School District, former superintendent Richard Yenchesky has filed to run for the School Board.

Yenchesky refused comment on his election bid. As part of the buyout to get him to resign as superintendent in June, the board agreed to pay him \$325,000 - \$110,00 of that included his salary for the 2001-02 school year.

Other candidates who filed for the School Board were Fred Fullerton, Elizabeth Ogard, Randy Kruk and Kelley Schoon. The five are running for two seats.

School Board President John Paque, who is not up for re-election, said he would welcome any of the candidates elected - including Yenchesky.

"Anybody who is eligible to run is perfectly welcome to file," Paque said.

Paque was not a Yenchesky supporter.

School Board member Dawn Picard, who filed her noncandidacy, said she supports Yenchesky's bid. Picard was a Yenchesky supporter as was Pamela Wilson, who also won't seek re-election.

"He has always been child oriented, and that's what this district needs," said Picard. "I think we heard a lot of negative things from a small group of people but it's interesting that I don't see any of his biggest critics as candidates."

Yenchesky, a 17 year superintendent, and the school district had been involved in a legal battle with former business administrator Jeff Seeley since last September.

The board eventually voted to terminate Seeley's contract.

Picard said Yenchesky's candidacy didn't influence her decision not to run.

"I didn't know he filed until today," Picard said Wednesday.



Posted Jan. 9, 2002

Superintendent search narrows

Six candidates in the running for De Pere job

By Jose De Jesus

DE PERE - The De Pere School District narrowed its list of superintendent candidates from 41 to six and hopes to name one by the month's end.

Three of the six candidates are from Northeastern Wisconsin. Charlene Gearing is an administrator in the Green Bay School District, Peter Behnke is a superintendent in Bonduel, and John Lewis is a superintendent in Brillion. One candidate, Jeffery Corkery, is from Iowa.

"They (the school district) need to make sure that the folks are participating, whomever they select, is an individual that fits the profile to lead the district in the future," interim Superintendent Rick Carlson said. Carlson was hired Sept. 4 to fill the roll of interim Superintendent after longtime Superintendent Richard Yenchesky left the district in June as result of a mutual separation agreement. Yenchesky has since filed to run for the School Board.

Paque said three panels will help in the interview process on Thursday and Friday. The panels will be composed of School Board members, citizens and staff, Paque said. "I want to see how well these candidates click," Paque said.

The School Board hired the company Educational Consulting Services to assist in the search. Behnke, a 13 year superintendent in the Bonduel School District, said he's looking forward to the challenge and the opportunity.

"I see the district as an opportunity and continue my work in school administration," Behnke said. "I want to improve education to De Pere students."

Lewis said he feels fortunate to be one of the finalists.

"I certainly feel confident I could take the district in the direction they seem to want to go at this point," said Lewis, who has spent 12 years as Brillion School District superintendent.

Corkery, a nine year superintendent at Tipton School District in Tipton, Iowa, said he's looking forward to meeting the school personnel, community members and discuss the job.

"I believe I have had a lot of exposure to educational issues," Corkery said. "I hope those (issues) would be consistent with the future of the district."

Zimman, who is a high school principal, said he recognizes the caliber of the De Pere School District.

"This district has a top reputation," said Zimman, a five year principal at Brown Deer. "It would an honor to be the school superintendent."

Villarruel, a five year superintendent at Ashland, said De Pere's district could be a pleasant place to work.

"It seems like an exciting place for me to work with and my children to attend school," he said.

Gearing has worked in the Green Bay School District for five years. She said she's honored to have been selected for an interview in De Pere.

"De Pere has a reputation for having an excellent school district, and for me, it's an exciting opportunity to look at leading a team to build on that foundation of excellence," she said.

Candidates

- * Peter Behnke, superintendent at Bonduel School District.
- * Jeffory Corkery, superintendent at Tipton, Iowa.
- * Charlene Gearing, administrator of instruction at Green Bay Public Schools.
- * John Lewis, superintendent at Brillion School District.
- * Benjamin Villarruel, superintendent at Ashland School District.
- * Richard Zimman, principal of Brown Deer High School in Brown Deer.

School Board President John Paque said the board is pleased with the six candidates.



Posted Jan. 13, 2002

De Pere district narrows search to 3

Superintendent needed to replace Yenchesky

By Nathan Phelps

DE PERE - The De Pere School District has cut its list of candidates for superintendent in half after interviewing six candidates Thursday and Friday nights.

The list was cut to three around midnight Friday, said Lyle Martens, a consultant working with the school district in the search.

"I think they've got a superintendent in there someplace," he said. "They have some nice candidates."

The remaining candidates are: Jeffery Corkery, a superintendent in Tipton, Iowa; John Lewis, a superintendent with the Brillion School District; and Benjamin Villarruel, superintendent in the Ashland School District.

De Pere School Board President Jon Paque said all of the candidates were strong.

"Ultimately we can only select one," he said. "It was very difficult to choose among the six."

The selection process is being done by a group of people including school staff, students and members of the community.

The district hired interim superintendent Rick Carlson in September to fill the position after former superintendent Richard Yenchesky left the district in the spring as the result of a mutual separation agreement.

School board members are expected to visit Ashland Friday.

"This is one further step, and we're going to take it one step at a time," Paque said.



Posted Jan. 25, 2002

Villarruel's goal: Focus on student achievement

By Jose De Jesus

DE PERE - Ben Villarruel said he plans to focus on student achievement for children in the De Pere School District, if he's hired as the next superintendent.

"I will continue to work for the best of the children," said Villarruel, during a phone interview Thursday while at a superintendent's conference in Milwaukee.

The De Pere School Board could name Villarruel of Ashland as its next superintendent. The Board meets today with him to discuss contractual matters. The Board approved a motion earlier this week to hire Villarruel.

Villarruel, Ashland's superintendent for five years, said he is looking forward to today's meeting.

"I think it's an opportunity for them to learn more about me and an opportunity for me to get to learn from the school board," he said.

Ashland School District consists of 2,300 students and a \$19.5 million budget, he said. De Pere has about 2,700 students and its budget is about \$21.5 million.

"I am looking forward to working with the staff, Board and the community," Villarruel said. "I want to continue the excellent program that exists in De Pere."

If all goes well, he hopes to start around July 1 as the new superintendent.

Educational Consulting Services, the firm hired by the Board to assist in the search, encouraged him to apply for the superintendent post, Villarruel said.

"I am happy to be in a position to be considered for the superintendent position," he said. "I am very impressed (with De Pere) and also my wife grew up in Ashwaubenon and that brings us close to family."

If hired, Villarruel will replace interim superintendent Rick Carlson, who retired from the Neenah School District in 2000, was hired in September after longtime Superintendent Richard Yenchesky left the district as the result of a mutual separation agreement with the School Board.

Despite Yenchesky's controversies with the district, Villarruel said he would work with any of the school board members elected in the April elections. Yenchesky is seeking a seat as a school board member, but advance past the February primary. Five people are seeking two seats.

"Whoever gets elected, it's my responsibility to work well and to carry out the decisions and priorities of

the School Board," he said.

Villarruel, whose current salary at Ashland School District is about \$90,000, was one of three final candidates selected by the Board Jan. 11.

Villarruel described himself as a "friendly and approachable" person.

"I am easy to talk to and a hard worker too," he said.

Villarruel, who has also worked as an assistant superintendent of business services at Whitnall School District in Greenfield, said he plans to stay in De Pere for a long time.

"We intend to live here," he said.

Ben Villarruel

Years in Ashland School District: five years

Age: 42

Family: Married to Clare, and has two children; Carmen, 6, and Olivia, 3.

Education: Bachelor's in philosophy from Holy Redeemer in Waterford; master's of science in social work from UW-Madison; a doctorate's in urban education from UW-Milwaukee

Community Involvement: Rotary Club of Ashland; Board of Trustees for Northland College; Ashland Chamber of Commerce board member; women's shelter board member; soccer and skiing volunteer coach.

Hobbies: golf, skiing, and soccer coaching

Life Motto: "I have a lot to be grateful for."



Posted Feb. 6, 2002

Familiar faces vie for School Board seats

By Jose De Jesus

DE PERE - Two De Pere School Board members might not be running for re-election this spring, but voters still will see several familiar names on the ballot - including the district's former superintendent.

Former De Pere Superintendent Richard Yenchesky is running for a seat on the board, as is former board member Randall Kruk. They face candidates Fred Fullerton, Elizabeth Ogard and Kelly Schoon in the Feb. 19 primary. The five are seeking two seats left vacant by Pamela Wilson and Dawn Picard, who are not running for re-election.

The top four vote-getters will advance to the April 2 election.

Yenchesky, who was the district's superintendent for 17 years, said he decided to run for School Board after reviewing board minutes for the last six months.

"It's obvious that the improvement of the educational program has minimal or very limited time dedicated to the task," Yenchesky said.

Yenchesky and the district had been involved in a legal battle with former business administrator since last September.

Rick Carlson was hired Sept. 4 to fill the role of interim superintendent after Yenchesky left the district in June as a result of a mutual separation agreement. As part of the buy-out, the board agreed to pay him \$325,000 - \$110,00 of that included his salary for the 2001-2002 school year.

Yenchesky said students should be informed of any decisions, and the decisions should be data-based and financially prudent.

"There are inexperienced decisions (being made). I question the effort and sincerity at researching past arbitrations, contract language and practices," he said.

Yenchesky said the district should refocus on educating students and "less of the old boy-country club attitude that appears in the leadership of the district."

Yenchesky said people should vote for him because of his past record and commitment to quality educational practices.

"I would be an advocate for students and a watchdog for the taxpayers," he said.

Fullerton, 35, said lack of communication is one issue the district is facing.

"Communication between the new administration, educators and the community needs to be addressed," said Fullerton, who has been living in the district for five years.

He said his current positions as a sales associate has made him a strong communicator.

"It requires me to build and maintain long-term relationships with a diverse group of people," Fullerton said. "It has contributed to my efficient, effective and physically responsible decisions making ability."

He said he would like to assist in long-term planning, involving facilities and curriculum.

"I think it needs to be addressed in order to move our district forward," Fullerton said. "I am committed to providing a high quality and diversified educational opportunity for the children of the district.

Kruk said he would help the district by planning ahead.

"We need to plan in short range and in long range," Kruk said. "We have to plan to avoid spending undue dollars and determine how to spend money wisely.

Kruk, 56, said his past experience dealing with school systems and with "tight budgets" could benefit the school district.

Kruk said the district needs to update the strategic plan dealing with facilities and staffing.

He also said financially, the district might need third party involvement.

"We need to ask for good accounting and ask a third party to do our audit," Kruk said.

Ogard, 46, said the district has been operating without a business manager, curriculum director and human resources manager for most of the school year.

"It is time we fill these positions and get on with the business of quality education in our district," Ogard said.

She said she would like to see a cooperative and collaborative environment between the district's administration and area municipalities.

"We need to work together on more open, green spaces and indoor facilities," she said.

Ogard said with taxpayer support, the district has "beautiful state of the art educational facilities."

"It is now time to focus programs on reaching every student's needs and achievement," she said.

A business discipline and successful grant writing experience are things she can bring to the district," Ogard said.

Believing the district has a chance to make a change, Schoon decided to file for School Board.

"Changes are (needed) to make parents aware of privileges that their children have, according to the Wisconsin law and the Department of Public Instruction," Schoon said.

She said finances, student growth, taxes and school facilities are issues facing the district.

"These issues should be addressed," she said.. "I can address the issues by the looking at our past history and making improvements based on the issues for today."

Schoon, 43, said reviewing the budget and making sure money is being spent effectively is a way she could help the district.

"I will question others... and try and make sure that we are reaching the district's mission statement goals," she said.

Schoon said she would make decisions based on facts that she's given by the committees or board.

"I'm an advocate for children," she said.

FRED FULLERTON

Address: 1768 Martinwood Court

Years in district: five

Age: 35

Occupation: orthopedic sales associate

Family: wife, Amy, two children

Education: bachelor's degree in business administration (marketing) from University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Political experience: none

Community involvement: WIAA basketball official, religious education teacher at Resurrection Church, volunteer YMCA coach, Red Bird Booster Club girls basketball coach, Phoenix Dunkers Booster Club member, chairman of annual dunkers golf outing.

RANDALL KRUK

Address: 4175 County W

Years in district: 14

Age: 56

Occupation: IT manager

Family: wife, Julie; three children

Education: bachelor's degree in political science

Political experience: member De Pere School Board 1991-93

ELIZABETH OGARD

Address: 918 Fox River Drive

Years in district: seven

Age: 46

Occupation: transportation consultant and grant writer

Family: husband, John, two children

Education: master's degree in business administration (marketing and finance), University of St. Thomas and bachelors degree in communications and business from Michigan State University

Green Bay Press Gazette - Familiar faces vie for School Board seats

Political experience: City Council commissioner, California, 1988-93; Ashwaubenon Planning Commission, 1993-95

Community Involvement: De Pere select soccer board, 2000; De Pere Youth Hockey president, 1999-2000; Heritage Elementary School PTA and leader of Science fest; Dickinson Elementary School musician in residence program; participated in district's curriculum development committee; member, selection committee for new superintendent

KELLY SCHOON

Address: 1913 N. Sunkist Circle

Years in district: six

Age: 43

Occupation: teacher, Assumption BVM

Family: husband, Duane, three children

Education: certification in early childhood from Waukesha County Technical College

Political experience: none

Community involvement: middle school Vision Screening volunteer; high and middle school graduation volunteer; chairperson, Wisconsin singers; Girl Scouts activities in Waukesha; mentor First Methodist Church

RICHARD YENCHESKY

Address: 602 Teal Court

Year in district: 18

Age: declined to provide

Occupation: former De Pere superintendent of schools

Family: wife, Karen, three children

Educatiuon: educational specialist degree

Political experience: superintendent for 17 years

Community involvement: none

De Pere School Board

Five names are on the Feb. 19 primary for the two seats on the De Pere School Board. The top four vote-getters will advance to the April 2 spring election.

De Pere School Board member serve a two year term and receive a \$2,050 annual salary.



Posted Feb.7, 2002

District set to sign new chief of schools

By: Jose De Jesus

Ben Villarruel is expected to sign his contract of \$107,500 today as the new De Pere School District superintendent.

"Ben didn't want to be the highest paid in the Bay Area Conference, so we settled down to the average," School Board President Jon Paque said.

Villarruel, Ashland's superintendent for five years, was hired Monday night after the School Board voted 6-1 and finalized contractual matters. Board member Dawn Picard was the only one to vote against the plan.

Paque said contract negotiations went "smoothly."

"Ben was a class act throughout, and I expect the will indicate the approach on contractual matters henceforth in the district," Paque said. "That is, dealing with financial realities and treating all parties with dignity and respect, while holding all accountable."

Villarruel's current salary at Ashland is about \$90,000 a year. His deal with De Pere is a two year contract.

"Villarruel obviously was pleased with the offer, and he looks forward to relocating in De Pere," interim superintendent Rick Carlson said.

Villarruel will begin his duties as superintendent on July 1. His contract in Ashland runs until June 30.

Carlson was hired on a temporary basis in September after longtime Superintendent Richard Yenchesky left the district as result of a mutual separation agreement.

Villarruel will meet today with the School Board today to participate with Carlson in the interviews to fill the business manager and curriculum director positions.



Posted Feb. 16, 2002

Dickinson pumps up with new gym

By Jose De Jesus

Exercising and eating no longer go together at Dickinson Elementary School in De Pere.

Thanks to a new gym, built as part of \$29.4 million referendum approved in 2000, the school no longer has to serve lunch at the same time physical education classes are held, like in the old gym cafeteria.

And students, appeared to be having fun in the new gym Friday.

"It is an important part because without good fitness and exercise, it affects everything we do with our body and mind," Kathy Grawlen, a physical education teacher, said this week at the gym's grand opening. "The new gym gives our children more space and the ability to move and to keep them safe."

Bleachers, a cafeteria, computer lab and remodeled library/media center were also included in the work.

Students are excited to be using the new gym.

Keegan Charlier said the dances were her favorite part of the grand opening event.

"I like when we had the opportunity to dance and the balloons were floating up in the air," Charlier said. "It was so cool."

School Principal Debra Gagnon said space and safety are the most important things the new gym brings to the school.

She said the gym will be available to the community once the project is completed.



Posted Feb. 20, 2002

School district could fill spot Friday

3 in contention for curriculum director position

By Jose De Jesus

The De Pere School District could select a finalists Friday for the post of curriculum director and make a recommendation to the School Board for its March 11 meeting.

The three candidates are from Northeast Wisconsin. Judy King is a kindergarten through fifth grade integrated language arts coordinator in the Menasha School District. Sue Sinclair is the director of curriculum, instruction and assessment at the Denmark School District. Mary Pfeiffer is an associate principal at Neenah High School.

The school district will meet with the three finalists Friday for second interviews, interim superintendent Rick Carlson said Tuesday.

The administrative job became vacant when Rick Neuenfeldt took a job as supervisor of fine arts for the La Crosse School District.

De Pere officials met with seven candidates last week and reduced their list to three.

Carlson said the district hopes to nail down a starting date for a curriculum director by April.

"We are looking for someone that would hopefully have some experience developing a curriculum plan that has been aligned with state standards," Carlson said.

Carlson said Ben Villarruel and other district administrators would meet with the top candidates Friday.

"We'd like them to spend more time in the district Friday, perhaps, to visit some schools and talk with staff members," Carlson said.

Villarruel, Ashland's superintendent for five years, was hired Feb. 4. as the new district's superintendent.

In the summer he will replace Carlson, who was hired in September after longtime Superintendent Richard Yenchesky left the district as the result of a mutual separation agreement.

Also, the De Pere business manager position has been reposted for additional applications until March 15.

That job was formerly held by Jeff Seeley. Seeley, whose contract was not renewed by the school board

last year, now works in Minnesota.

Carlson said the screening committee did not reach consensus of any of the candidates brought in for interviews.

"There was no one with the desire, experience and characteristics that we felt could fill that need," he said.

Carlson said the district is looking for a candidate with a strong accounting background and managerial experience.

He said six of the seven candidates were from Wisconsin. The other candidate was from Washington.



Posted Mar. 6, 2002

Middle school principal picked as De Pere's curriculum director

By: Jose De Jesus

De Pere Middle School Principal Bonnie Emrick said she is happy to become the district's new curriculum and instruction director.

Emrick began her new duties this week.

"I enjoy doing curriculum work," Emrick said. "It's a good district, and I will help them to oversee the instructional program."

The De Pere School Board voted 5-2 last week to hire Emrick for the administrative vacancy.

"She is competent and will get the job done," board President Jon Paque said. "She is a veteran teacher, administrator and has a good work ethic and is of high integrity."

Ben Villarruel, the district's new superintendent, said the district needed someone who could come in immediately, and Emrick was the right choice.

"Based on what I kept hearing, Bonnie possesses the qualities and qualifications to do an excellent job," Villarruel said.

Emrick, who was the De Pere's Middle School principal for six years, was not one of the three candidates being evaluated in recent weeks. The three candidates were Judy King from the Menasha School District, Sue Sinclair from the Denmark School District and Mary Pfeiffer from Neenah High School.

Emrick, who will earn \$82,000 a year, applied when Rick Neuenfeldt left the district last summer.

Villarruel said after interviewing the three finalists, he met with Emrick and asked her whether she still had an interest.

"I believe that if you have people internally who are qualified to do a good job, you should give them a close look," he said.

Interim Superintendent Rick Carlson said the middle school's assistant principal Curt Albers, would be the interim principal for the rest of the school year.

Also, the De Pere business manager position is expected to be filled next month, Paque said. The position has been reposted for additional applications until March 15.

"I will hope within the next month we have a business manager identified or hired," Paque said.



Posted May 22, 2002

De Pere Middle School gets new principal

Albers selected from pool of 42 applicants

By Jose De Jesus

The De Pere School District filed another position this week - hiring Curt Albers as its new middle school principal.

"I'm excited," Albers said Tuesday. "A lot of positive things are happening in our district, and I'm glad to be part of that."

The School Board unanimously voted to approve new superintendent Ben Villarruel's recommendation to hire Albers.

Albers, who will earn \$77,350, will replace Bonnie Emrick, who was named the district's new curriculum and instruction director in March - she replaced Rick Neuenfeldt, who left the district last summer.

Albers will begin his duties immediately.

Board President Jon Paque was pleased to hire Albers - who was one of 42 applicants interested in the job.

"Allowing Curt to compete with others certainly indicates that he was well earned the position," Paque said. "The board's role was to approve the recommendation, but also make sure that the candidates were qualified, and a fair process was followed."

Albers' education:

New De Pere Middle School Principal Curt Albers has a bachelor's in social studies from St. Norbert College and a master's in educational leadership from Marian College.



Posted Aug. 20, 2002

School district boosts budget 8%

By: Jose De Jesus

The De Pere School District on Monday tentatively approved an 8 percent increase in 2002-03 general fund expenditures.

"The staffing cost represent the largest increase," said Sue Buchholz, the district's business manager. "Staffing is about 80 percent of your budget, so it's basically an increase due to salary and fringe (benefits)."

Total estimated spending for 2002-03 is \$23.3 million, up from \$21.6 million in 2001-02. The district estimates it could add 100 students this year.

Buchholz said a 20 percent increase in health insurance cost is also a factor in the budget increase.

"Statewide averages are ranging from 35 to 40 percent, so we are actually in the lower side of a health insurance increase," she said.

Last year, the district budgeted \$2.2 million for health and dental insurance, compared with \$2.6 million this year.

The district has about 3,000 students and about 375 employees this year.

It includes all or parts of De Pere, Bellevue, Glenmore, Ledgview, Morrison, Rockland, and the town of Wrightstown.

The district added eight teachers in the 2002-03 budget.

The total tax levy for the new school year is expected to be \$7.8 million, an increase of about 1.5 percent over last year's levy of \$7.7 million. The levy is the amount of money collected through property taxes.

Buchholz said the levy increase is "to make up for what we are not going to receive in state aid."

The projected tax rate is \$11.52 per \$1,000 of equalized property value. That's 19 cents less than last year's rate of \$11.71.

Tax bills are based on assessed value, not equalized, so actual rates will vary by municipality within the school district.

"I think the budget attempts to meet the needs of the district and to deal with the growth that we have had in the district," new superintendent Ben Villarruel said.



Posted Sep. 28, 2002

Brown County school districts seeing more students

Administrators say they can handle growth, for now

By Kelley Bruss

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More students are enrolled this year than last year in all Brown County school districts except Ashwaubenon.

And in Green Bay, a gain of 260 students pushed the district's full-time equivalent enrollment over the 20,000 mark for the first time, according to numbers reported Friday to the state Department of Public Instruction.

The increase includes an additional 116 students at Green Bay Preble High School, which now has an enrollment of 2,111/ That's above the district's 2,000-student maximum guideline for high schools.

De Pere's FTE enrollment passed 3,000, and Howard-Suamico's passed 4,500. At Ashwaubenon, enrollment dropped 3.3 percent as the district lost 105 in FTE enrollment.

De Pere posted the largest percentage increase - 4.6 - with a 137 FTE enrollment increase.

"At least for this time, we are prepared for it," said De Pere Superintendent Ben Villarruel, noting the district's recent referendum was designed to help accommodate growth.

Still, if the increases continue on this pace for four or five years, space could become an issue again, he said.

About the count

The so-called "third-Friday" enrollment count was taken Sept. 20 and due to the state Friday.

Districts take both head counts and FTE counts, but the FTE is the figure the state uses in formulas to determine how much the state aid districts will receive and where the revenue caps will be set.

Students who don't attend full time - such as children in early childhood programs or half-day kindergarten- count for one-half or some other fraction in the FTE count.

About third-Friday enrollment

The so-called "third-Friday" count of school enrollment, used by the state for financial calculations, is actually a full-time-equivalency count, not a pupil count.

The count, taken on the third Friday of September each year, is used to help the Department of Public Instruction compute state aid, which is based on the number of full-time students each district has.

Students in half-day kindergarten programs and those who receive early childhood pre-kindergarten services are counted as a fraction. Two half-time students, in other words, might count together as one FTE enrollment in the third-Friday count.

Also, third-Friday enrollment figures do not include those who live in another district but have transferred in, or home-schooled and private-schooled students who attend part time.

Because of these factors, the actual number of children served in each district, also counted last week, is almost always a little higher than the third-Friday count the state uses to determine aid.

For example, Green Bay's pupil count this year is 20,353 - 128 more than the FTE count.

Preble passes 2,000

Green Bay's increase of about 260 was shy of the 350 planners had projected. Still, it was enough - and it was concentrated enough - to push Preble over that 2,000 mark.

Besides the increase at Preble, enrollment also is up at East and West high schools but down 50 at Southwest. Enrollment is up at all four traditional middle schools.

Parents on the east side are waiting to see whether the growth around Preble and Edison Middle School will lead the district to propose boundary changes for those schools.

Edison's enrollment went up 29. Enrollment at Red Smith, a kindergarten through eighth-grade school that also feeds into Preble, went up nine students - but those could be in elementary or middle school.

Superintendent Daniel Nerad said it's too soon to say whether growth will prompt a recommendation for a Preble boundary change.

"There's a different ability to handle students at high school, " he said, adding that more classrooms and scheduling flexibility make it easier to absorb growth.

Principal Christopher Wagner said Preble is feeling full. He said the school's recent renovation and expansion made the school ready for 2,000 students.

"Now that we're getting over it, we're starting to use rooms that weren't designed as regular classrooms," he said.

Some of his staff members, especially those in areas such as bookkeeping and attendance, are taxed by the extra load.

"It's that many more people to deal with," Wagner said. "We're stretched more and more."

Academically, the additional students shouldn't make a difference though. Wagner said Preble's student-teacher ratio is in line with that at other schools.

Still, the growth is becoming an issue.

"Our concern is how much more can we absorb," Wagner said.

Nerad said administrators will have to look at growth that has already occurred along with projections for the future before bringing a report to the School Board in October or November.

"There's ups and downs every year," Nerad said. "We have to make some distinction between up and down and ongoing growth."

Green Bay's lower-than-expected total growth in the district might have some impact on its 2002-03 budget, but that's not known yet, Nerad said. Enrollment is one figure used to determine state aid and revenue limits.

He sees the continued growth in the district as a positive sign.

"I think this is good news, a statement about our community and our schools," Nerad said.

Brown County fall 2002 school enrollment

Most Brown County public school districts saw an increase in enrollment this year - Ashwaubenon was the only exception. The following list shows full-time equivalent enrollment by district.

District 2001 2002 Percent change

District	2001	2002	Percent Change
Ashwaubenon	3,157	3,052	-3.3
De Pere	2,973	3,110	4.6
Denmark	1,600	1,624	1.5
Green Bay	19,965	20,225	1.3
Howard-Suamico	4,446	4,595	3.4
Pulaski	3,395	3,489	2.8
West De Pere	1,867	1,886	1
Wrightstown	1,005	1,041	3.6

Suburban growth

Howard-Suamico Superintendent Christine Weymouth said her district's growth was anticipated. In fact,

projections show about three more years of significant growth before the number are expected to settle into slower, steady growth.

Howard-Suamico's third-Friday FTE count increased by 149, or about 3.4 percent.

Much of that growth was in kindergarten and first grade, where increases were even higher than expected.

Weymouth said the amount of land in the northern and western regions of the district provides great potential for growth.

And homes "are of the price range where middle to young families can move in," Weymouth said.



Posted Nov. 16, 2002

School ready to show off upgrades

By Jose De Jesus

If you've been waiting to see how the De Pere High School looks after its major renovation, today is the day.

The school will open its doors to district residents for an open house and addition dedication.

"I think it's a tribute to the district taxpayers that funded it who will hopefully put it to good use - both adults and kids," said Jon Paque, School Board president.

The school underwent a \$17 million renovation as part of a \$29.4 million referendum passed in 2000.

At the high school, the renovation project included a new gym and classrooms and expanded lunchroom, music areas and classrooms.

"In the old buildings the walls were ugly or the floors were kind falling apart, but now it's nice and beautiful," said senior Ali Spevacek.

Superintendent Ben Villarruel said the event is an opportunity for district residents to see what they supported more than two years ago.

"I'm just very thankful to the community for allowing us to expand the facilities and for us to use money wisely," Villarruel said.

Spevacek said that as recently as this week she noticed a change at school.

"Just this week we got done with our musical and standing on stage I was very proud of our new auditorium," she said. "The sound, the lightening - it's just beautiful."

If you go

The open house and addition dedication begins at 2 p.m. today at De Pere High School, 1700 Chicago St.



Posted Dec.12, 2002

Board members' e-mails will be saved

By Jim Kneiszel

De Pere School Board members will be able to dump all e-mail correspondence deemed -public information by the Wisconsin attorney general's office - onto a school district computer server for safe keeping from now on.

The board Monday learned about a district plan to save e-mail correspondence in the event of an open records request. The e-mails will be transferred to district computers and be backed up on compact discs for several years to comply with the open records ruling.

"You don't have to worry about saving (the school related e-mail) on your computer at home," Superintendent Ben Villarruel told board members. "We'll archive it and keep it as long as we have to."

The issue of school e-mails as public record surfaced statewide recently after it was revealed that every member of the Oshkosh School Board had deleted e-mails from constituents regarding district boundary and consolidation plans. The Oshkosh Northwestern newspaper had requested e-mail correspondence and found out that board members had already deleted some of the hundreds of e-mails that clogged their home computers.

Attorney General and Gov. elect Jim Doyle had ruled that the correspondence was subject to open records rules and failure to save the messages violated open records laws.

In De Pere, all school-related correspondence is to be forwarded to a district server to take the burden of saving mail off board members, Villarruel said. Board members stressed they need to be careful with any correspondence from constituents and between each other because of the ruling. They reported they currently receive only a few school related e-mails at home.

"Any information we share with other board members we should be comfortable posting on the front of the school," board member Bill Van Beek said.

In a related move, the majority of board members shot down an upcoming Wisconsin Association of School Boards resolution supporting legislation to exempt e-mail communications from the open records law. The only board member to voice support for allowing e-mail correspondence to be private was Suse Reinke-Riddle.

"As a board member I have a fear of being isolated from policies such as this one," Reinke-Riddle said. "But on the other hand, I want to make sure the way this board does business is credible and beyond the letter of the law."



Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Dec. 22, 2002

Ledgeview gets OK on planned utility lines

Press-Gazette

The De Pere School District has authorized the town of Ledgeview to run high-volume water and sewer lines through a 23-acre parcel once proposed for a new elementary school.

The water and sewer lines along Brown County G (Dickinson Road) and Bower Creek Road probably will cost the district \$50,000 to \$80,000 and are expected to be installed this winter as part of planned extension of utility services in the town, said De Pere Schools Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

There are no plans for the 23-acre property on the northwest corner of the intersection, but Villarruel told the De Pere School Board this week that the high-capacity lines would serve future school expansion or enhance the property value, should the district sell the land to developers.

The town will install an 8-inch pipe for the sewer line and a 6-inch pipe for water, which is a little larger size than minimum standards.

The school district bought the Ledgeview property in the late 1990s in advance of a 1999 referendum that would have placed an elementary school on it, said Rob Lennon, pupil services director for the district. The referendum failed, but the district has kept the property. It's the only undeveloped land that the district owns.

"We felt it was cost-effective to put the larger line in at this time for a school or reselling the property," Lennon said.

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Posted Feb. 11, 2003

De Pere superintendent accused of illegal payroll activities in Ashland suit

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE -- De Pere School District Superintendent Ben Villarruel is being accused of forcing an employee to falsify payroll records in his last job as superintendent of the Ashland School District.

A former Ashland schools payroll benefits specialist, Belinda Miller, also accuses Villarruel and the Ashland district's business manager of wrongful discharge for creating intolerable working conditions that forced her to resign.

Miller is suing the Ashland district and School Board, asking to be reinstated to her job, be paid damages for past, present and future lost earnings, attorney's fees and compensatory damages for mental suffering, fright, distress, anxiety and emotional trauma.

The illegal payroll activities began in 1998, according to the civil suit filed Feb. 3 in Ashland County Circuit Court. Villarruel was hired away from Ashland as the De Pere superintendent a year ago, the same week Miller resigned.

According to the suit, Villarruel and business manager Bonnie Stegmann ordered Miller to falsify the payroll records of a full-time custodian. Miller contends she was asked to unlawfully classify a full-time worker as an independent contractor. She said at times hourly workers were not paid for time worked, were not paid at an overtime rate when they qualified and were forced to take compensatory time off in lieu of wages.

Villarruel is out of the office this week and could not be reached for comment. Reached Monday, Miller wouldn't comment on the suit. Ashland superintendent Ken Kasinski, and Miller's attorney did not return calls from the Green Bay Press-Gazette Monday.

De Pere School Board President Jon Paque could not be reached for comment.

Villarruel replaced former superintendent Richard Yenchesky after the De Pere School Board paid Yenchesky \$325,000 as part of a separation agreement in summer 2001.

According to the suit, Villarruel and Stegmann "retaliated against" Miller, including "no longer permitting her to go to training seminars, isolating her work station from other employees" and "sabotaging (her) work performance by denying timely access to payroll information necessary for the completion of her job."

An order to deny employees wages and time off and poor work conditions prompted Miller to resign, the suit says. The school district has 45 days to respond to the suit.



Posted Mar. 18, 2003

New Ledgeview subdivision diverted to Dickinson Elementary

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE - With Heritage Elementary School nearing enrollment capacity , the De Pere School Board on Monday altered school service boundaries to divert students moving into the new subdivision to the less-crowded Dickinson Elementary School.

Mystery Valley, located near Brown County G and GV, should have fallen into the Heritage Elementary area, but Heritage is projected to be eight students shy of its 650-student capacity for the 2003-04 school year.

So Superintendent Ben Villerruel recommended the board move the subdivision and its 274 building lots into the Dickinson area. Dickinson is projected to be 100 short of its capacity for the coming year.

Villerruel had said he wanted the board to take action before any houses were built in the new subdivision so new residents had a clear idea where their children would attend school. Mystery Valley developer Thomas Juza has said he hopes to sell the first lots and begin construction late this fall.

Four new subdivisions in Ledgeview and on land recently annexed to De Pere from Rockland are expected to add 700 homes to the district and threaten to take its five schools over capacity. The district expects to pick up at least one school-age child for every two homes in the new subdivisions.

* In other business, the board authorized the addition of six new teachers and three new custodians for the 2003-04 school year at a projected cost of \$405,000. The cost of the teaching positions is about \$300,000. The new teachers will help handle the anticipated enrollment increase of 94 students for the coming year. The estimates include salary and benefits.



Green Bay Weather



Temp: 65 °F
Hi: 68 °F
Lo: 58 °F

LOCAL NEWS

Posted Mar. 30, 2003

De Pere School Board

Two seats are up for election. Seats have a three-year term with a \$2,050 salary.

Election 2003

Following is biographical information submitted by the candidates and their top three issues. (I) indicates incumbent.



Jon Paque (I)

For more election coverage,
[click here](#)

Age: 50

Address: 609 S. Superior St., De Pere

Occupation: research and state reporting manager for Fox Valley Technical College

Political experience: member of De Pere School Board, 2000-03; two years as president

Family: married, two children

Jim Growt

Age: 47

Address: 1301 N. Summer Range Road, De Pere

Occupation: vice president, Fort Howard Steel Co.

Political experience: none

Family: married, two children

Nancy Hayes

Age: 47

Address: 1606 New Plank Road, De Pere

Occupation: retired/housewife

Political experience: none

Family: married, two children

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Libby Ogard

Age: 47

Address: 918 Fox River Drive, De Pere

Occupation: senior associate, Tioga Group (freight transportation and policy consultant)

Political experience: 1988-93, City Council commissioner, Hayward, Calif.; chairman, Community Development Block Grant Committee, 1993-95 village of Ashwaubenon's Planning Commission

Family: married, two children

What are your top three issues?

Paque: 1. Maintain continuity in leadership and focus. After hearing of issues via a public nonrenewal hearing requested by a staff person in early 2001, citizens took charge and elected several new board members. I was elected board president, and with other board leaders proceeded in a shared leadership and participatory approach.

2. Continuous improvement is proceeding with vigor. Focus is toward our priority purpose: maximizing academic achievement and social development of all children with resources we have. An annual planning process involving parents and staff has been established. Curriculum and benchmarks in grades K-12 are being reviewed, plus professional development needs. Multi-year plans for facilities, technology, outdoor athletic facilities, and revenue/expense have been completed or are in progress.

3. The state budget deficit threatens resources, and federal No Child Left Behind Act may impose unfunded mandates. The district, though, is blessed with talented highly dedicated administrators, teachers, and support staff. Teachers and support staff units have expressed their appreciation and support regarding the direction the district has taken.

Growt: 1. Funding: The state has committed to two-thirds funding for cost of education. The governor says that much of that funding will go by the wayside, but we need to find out how to get the funding we need. We aren't in a position to make a decision on how much that will be, the state will tell us how much money would we get. Once that's determined, the board will need to work together and decided the best way to use that funding.

2. Prioritizing: How do we prioritize what's important as we try to give our kids a proper education without overburdening the property taxpayer.

3. Teachers: The (Qualified Economic Offer) issue is very important. The challenge for a board of education will be finding and keeping the best quality educators that we can get.

Hayes: Our first issue is growth. We have a good community and people want to live here. But because of that, it brings more children, which creates a strain on our budget and our facilities. Another issue related to growth is how do we meet our enrollment projections, particularly with the budget restraints. We will have to look at how those cuts will affect us locally. A third issue would be our facility needs. I'd like to see the district create a strategic plan that is created by the administrators, educators, parents and community residents of the district that would prioritize the needs of the district so as we face facility needs or budget cuts, we can move forward with a plan as a team to address those priorities.

Ogard: 1. Funding: We are fortunate that due to a growing student enrollment, a shortfall in state payments is unlikely in our district this year. But the message is clear, new programs are in jeopardy if we do not find new and different sources of funding. I would set district goals to secure grant money available at the local, state and national levels to supplement our current funding.

2. Growth: The town of Ledgeview recently approved building permits for 461 housing units. Once we exceed our classroom capacity, we will be forced to build a new school or explore other strategies such as staggered class days or other programs to accommodate a growing population. I would ensure that the school and the city planners would work together on plans which draw from best practices in Smart Growth initiatives.

3. Accountability: As a district we need to set up a process to measure individual performance levels for educators and ensure that parents have a mechanism to monitor student performance on a more frequent basis than quarterly report cards. The process of implementing a performance evaluation process for teachers will help us with important feedback, which will help us identify areas of weakness and opportunities for additional training and program improvement.

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 21, 2003

Districts boost pay to lure teachers



Marketing teacher Pat Staeger helps Anna Karnopp, a senior at Luxemburg-Casco High School, during class recently. He says his district needs to keep starting pay at a reasonable level to attract and keep teachers. Evan Siegle/Press-Gazette

Some flexible with pay schedule when setting starting salaries

By Kelley Bruss

kbruss@greenbaypressgazette.com

Starting pay for a brand-new Green Bay teacher is higher than starting pay for a brand-new Gibraltar teacher.

Perhaps that doesn't surprise you — cost-of-living differences apply to most jobs and most expenses.

But in a comparison of starting pay in our four-county corner of Northeastern Wisconsin, another trend may come as a surprise.

Green Bay long offered the area's highest starting pay. Now it's near the top, but no longer at the top.

Administrators in both small and large districts feel forced to pay attention to how their pay compares as they compete for new teachers and try to hire the best people available without breaking their budgets.

Starting pay in Green Bay this year is \$27,633. According to Wisconsin School Boards Association data, Gibraltar's current starting pay is \$25,536.

Special report: Teachers' salaries

Since the enactment in 1993 of the Qualified Economic Offer — a law designed in part to keep property taxes from increasing too quickly — educators have argued that increases in teacher salaries don't reflect the work teachers do and the respect they deserve.

The Press-Gazette examines the issue in a two-part series.

To read Day 2 stories, click on the following links:

Other examples include Pulaski, Sevastopol and Luxemburg-Casco, who are all within \$200 of each other, at \$26,536, \$26,689 and \$26,704, respectively.

Starting pay is often, but not always, the bottom of the pay schedule. Denmark, for example, currently hires teachers at the fourth step of its schedule — \$28,307 — as a way to attract new teachers. Some superintendents of small districts don't want to put too much emphasis on comparing themselves — especially to Green Bay, which has about four times as many students as the next-largest area district, Howard-Suamico.

Instead, they emphasize what their district offers that a bigger district cannot.

"You will not earn as much money in this district as you would in a much larger district," said Luxemburg-Casco Superintendent Pat Saunders. "You will not have the same experience, either."

He cited a more personal atmosphere and close connections with district leaders as some reasons teachers might choose a smaller district.

Teachers have to decide what they want in their work experience, then find a district that can offer that, he said.

"There has to be somewhat of a fit and an understanding of what you're getting into," Saunders said.

Green Bay takes a similar approach, touting the things its size makes possible.

"I want as many people finding our school district to be as attractive as possible," Superintendent Daniel Nerad said.

As the largest district in the area, Green Bay offers a lot to make it attractive to prospective employees, Nerad said. He thinks student diversity and the wide array of programs are among the district's positive features.

"That's also put side by side with what people are paid," Nerad said. "I'm a practical person. I realize that."

Comparisons

In the days before the Qualified Economic Offer — the law that gives school boards the power to limit the district's costs for teacher salary and benefit increases to 3.8 percent — "comparables" were a key in district and union negotiations over teacher pay and later in arbitrators' rulings.

For most bargaining groups, comparisons with other district groups were most important, said John Wilson, Green Bay's assistant superintendent for human resources.

But for teachers, comparables focused more on comparisons with other districts, Wilson said. Green Bay had about 14 comparable districts — those with similar sizes and situations.

Under an imposed QEO, a district offers a 3.8 percent package increase and contracts can't go to arbitration over economic issues.

- [Trends in teacher pay in Northeastern Wisconsin](#)

- [Teacher benefits](#)

- [Teacher work day](#)

To read Day 1 stories, click on the following links:

- [Teachers fear salary crisis](#)

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- [Teaching has no price tag](#)

- [A QEO explainer](#)

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Graphics:

- [How a teacher salary schedule works](#)

- [Teacher pay increases](#)

- [Green Bay average pay comparisons](#)

(Note: Graphics are PDF files that require the free [Acrobat Reader](#).)

What is QEO?

QEO stands for Qualified Economic Offer. The state enacted QEO in 1993.

The QEO is one part of a so-called "three-legged stool" for school funding. The other two parts are revenue caps, which limit districts' annual budgets, and two-thirds funding, the state's commitment to pick up two-thirds of the total cost of K-12 education.

Under the QEO, districts may prevent contract negotiations from going to arbitration on economic issues by imposing a QEO — offering total salary and benefit increases of 3.8 percent.

In the decade since QEO was created, districts in the area usually have settled on contracts with slightly higher increases than 3.8 percent.

While comparables have no teeth without arbitration, districts and unions still keep their eyes on those similar districts.

"You want to be competitive, but you certainly don't look at it in the same way as far as: What can I offer and how can I defend what I offer?" Wilson said.

Denmark Superintendent LeRoy Meles said it may sound selfish, but he wants to hang on to the good teachers he has. Watching how Denmark's pay compares with other districts is one way to accomplish that.

But his interest in comparables isn't all for the district's sake. Meles said he also wants to be fair.

"At least we want to make sure that they're paid adequately in comparison to others," he said.

Luxemburg example

Saunders said Luxemburg-Casco used to offer the lowest starting pay among its eight comparable districts, which, in this case, are the eight other districts in its athletic conference.

The problem came to a head several years ago, when Luxemburg-Casco lost 14 teachers — about 10 percent of its staff.

"They could move to other school districts and immediately get a \$2,000, \$3,000 raise," said high school teacher Pat Staeger.

The problem compounds when teachers are needed in fields where demand is high and supply scarce.

"I know that this has happened: that he's (the principal) offered a contract to his top ones and gone all the way to six or seven (candidates)," Staeger said.

He said it's not in the district's best interest to have its top choices reject a job.

"We told the board what was happening here," Staeger said, adding the union's position was that "we should at least be in the middle; we're the biggest school in the conference."

Saunders said the School Board agreed with the union.

"Together, they accomplished it," he said.

Greener grass

Teachers say there's no doubt pay plays a major role in employment decisions.

"We've lost a lot of people to Green Bay, to Ashwaubenon," said Kathy Romsos, president of the Denmark Education Association.

She chooses to stay in her job at Denmark Elementary because of community ties, family and friends.

But the union and the district feared there wouldn't be enough other teachers making the same choice.

Under the law, a district also may choose to negotiate contracts using collective bargaining.

Following are a few online resources related to QEO:

- Department of Public Instruction summary of the governor's proposed budget as it relates to education: www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/pb/2003sb44.html.

- Wisconsin Education Association Council resource page on QEO: www.weac.org/Capitol/qeopage.htm.

- Wisconsin Association of School Boards, 2003-05 state budget issue paper on QEO: www.wasb.org/legislative/geocollbarg.pdf.

To help stem the tide, Denmark is using a tactic other districts have used as well: New teachers aren't hired at the first step of the salary schedule.

Denmark hired at the second and third step for a while and is now hiring at the fourth step in its scale.

In 2002-03, a new teacher hired in Denmark would make \$28,307 while a new teacher hired in Green Bay would make \$27,633.

However, Green Bay has flexibility in its hiring step, too. Most teachers are hired at the first step, but administrators have the option to offer a higher starting pay.

Green Bay's contract also requires that, with a handful of exceptions, teachers hired from another district must be paid at least what they made in their previous job.

"Another way we can manage some of this ... is to have that flexibility when it's needed," Nerad said.

The Denmark teachers said hiring at the fourth step is good for attracting new teachers, but it doesn't address pay concerns for more experienced teachers.

"You spend a lot more time at the end of the pay scale than you do at the beginning," said Scott McPherson, a seven-year teacher.

Green Bay: Magnet no more?

Dick Feldhausen, executive director of the Green Bay Education Association, started teaching in 1970.

At that time, the Green Bay School District wasn't even considering applicants who had less than two years of experience, he said.

"Green Bay was a place that was a magnet attracting people to it," he said.

Now, Feldhausen sees young teachers "coming here to get the experience and then going somewhere else."

He said about half the teachers the district hires today are coming in at the bottom of the salary schedule, with no experience.

The district advantage: New teachers are cheaper. The downside: They don't always want to stay.

Keith Patt, president of the Green Bay Education Association, said Green Bay is an urban school district and comes with some of the difficulties that identity includes.

He said multiple factors influence teachers' choices of districts. Those might include salary, parental support, student discipline and administrative support.

"If one of those factors is in the negative category, something else is going to have to offset that," Patt said.

Crisis ahead?

Both small and large districts see the situation building toward a crisis.

As the Green Bay district deals with changing student needs and challenges, it wants to maintain its ability to attract — and pay for — the best teachers.

"It's critically important that we remain competitive," Nerad said.

"We're going to have to do something," said Romsos, the Denmark union president. "Our schools are going to be in danger."

While both sizes of districts worry about their staff bolting for the other size, both also worry about people leaving the field completely.

Romsos said that if districts can't improve the pay they offer, the only people they'll be able to hire will be those providing a second income for their families.

"I'm going to be here," she said. "I'm not going anywhere.

"But how are we going to get new people or young people to stay ... unless we only look for bright people who marry a wealthy man or woman?"

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 21, 2003

Most educators happy with benefit packages

By Kelley Bruss

kbruss@greenbaypressgazette.com

Wisconsin public school teachers typically have good health insurance.

And, like other public employees, their retirement plan isn't too shabby, either.

"We do have some of the best benefits ever," said John Dunlap, a math teacher at Green Bay Southwest High School. "That's a big advantage of being in education."

But teachers say they shouldn't be expected to accept lower pay increases simply because their benefits are good.

In the past decade, percentage increases in districts' costs for benefits have outpaced percentage increases to base pay and, often, to individual teachers' salaries.

De Pere High School teacher Randy Soquet, president of the De Pere Education Association, knows that the health insurance is good.

Just seven years into the field, he's a long way from retirement, but he's heard good things about that benefit, too.

The Green Bay Education Association estimated a Wisconsin teacher who retires after 30 years on the job will annually receive about half of his or her final year's salary.

"Those are very nice pieces to the compensation package," Soquet said. "However, neither one of those pays the utility bills. Neither one of those pays the 20-cent-a-gallon hike in gasoline prices."

When a district and union announce a percentage increase agreed upon for teacher compensation, that percentage includes both benefits and salary increases.

With health-care costs continuing to rise, the percentage eaten up by benefits grows while the portion left for pay raises shrinks.

"We do have good health insurance, and we have paid dearly for that through our salaries," said Denmark Education Association President Kathy Romsos.

Special report: Teachers' salaries

Since the enactment in 1993 of the Qualified Economic Offer — a law designed in part to keep property taxes from increasing too quickly — educators have argued that increases in teacher salaries don't reflect the work teachers do and the respect they deserve.

The Press-Gazette examines the issue in a two-part series.

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In Green Bay, for example, an individual teacher with 29 years of experience got a 0.68 percent salary raise from 2000-01 to 2001-02, while the district's costs for the teacher's benefits went up 14.22 percent in the same period, according to Department of Public Instruction data.

That set of data does not specify any personal changes that might have impacted the teacher's benefits. But in each of the five years before that, the percentage increase for that teacher's benefits was higher than the percentage increase for salary.

Green Bay's coverage levels have not changed since 1990, although the plan did switch to a preferred provider organization, or PPO, additional premium was added for the traditional plan, and the deductibles were negotiated. With a PPO, the plan covers more costs if members use designated health-care providers. Members may go to other providers, but will shoulder more of the costs to do so.

No argument: Good benefits

Good luck finding anyone who doesn't think teachers' benefits are good.

"Overall, the teachers have (health-insurance) programs that are better than typical," said Denmark Superintendent LeRoy Meles. "But those are choices they've made. Because of the total-package concept, they've given up salary to purchase those."

But educators also note that virtually any job holds a different set of advantages and disadvantages.

Luxemburg-Casco Superintendent Pat Saunders said whether you're talking bankers, dentists, postal workers or teachers, "there are unique aspects of that career that exist."

It's not fair to single out teachers' benefits and make them a reason for minimal pay increases over the past decade, De Pere Superintendent Ben Villarruel said.

He said people in other jobs often earn perks such as bonuses or stock options — benefits not available in education.

Job enticement?

Administrators and teachers worry good benefits won't be enough to encourage rising stars to make education their career choice.

New workers, just out of college, may not focus much on their benefits package; the pay has to be there to keep the field strong, they argue.

"You say you have health insurance here and good retirement — they're 35 years away from that," said Luxemburg-Casco teacher Pat Staeger. "They look at that pay: 'What have I got to spend? I'm tired of being poor.'"

Some recent college graduates are paying attention, though.

Jonathan Jagler, a first-year teacher at Green Bay Southwest High School, was most interested in the pay he'd earn to take care of school loans and car payments and to save for a house with his wife of 10 months.

Graphics:

- [How a teacher salary schedule works](#)
- [Teacher pay increases](#)
- [Green Bay average pay comparisons](#)

(Note: Graphics are PDF files that require the free [Acrobat Reader](#).)

Insurance example

Every school district offers different varieties of health insurance and pays differing amounts on the premiums.

Generally, teachers and administrators agree the plans are good. Following is a description of the Green Bay School District's health and dental plans, as an example.

Health insurance

• Preferred provider organization, or PPO:

District pays 100 percent of covered services after deductible (\$100, individual; \$300 family). Out of network, district covers 80 percent of covered services and the deductibles are doubled.

• Traditional plan: Employee may see any doctor at any time but pays for charges above reasonable and customary. Out-of-pocket maximum is \$1,000 per year.

• Premiums, PPO: Single, \$385 per month, district pays 100 percent; family, \$960 per month, district pays 94 percent, employee pays 6 percent.

• Premiums, traditional plan: \$50 per month more than PPO premiums.

• Prescription drugs: Co-pay is \$6 for generic, \$12 for brand-name formulary drugs, \$24 for

But he wasn't disinterested in benefits, especially health insurance.

"My wife and I specifically looked at it because we're going to start a family in a couple years," Jagler said.

The retirement program is valuable only for those who invest their lives in education, said Dick Feldhausen, executive director of the Green Bay Education Association.

"You've gotta get to the end first," he said. "Educators have a relatively good retirement system if they've put 30 or more years into the system."

He also pointed out that firefighters, police, legislators, mayors and other public employees have the same benefit or better.

Total compensation

Green Bay Superintendent Daniel Nerad said it's simplistic to look at teacher compensation only in terms of pay.

"What we try to focus on in negotiations is total compensation," he said.

A district's costs for teacher compensation include money spent on benefits such as insurance and contributions to the retirement fund.

"The benefit side has increased so much," Nerad said. "I'm not trying to minimize the concern about salary ... (but) it has an impact on the salary side."

Staege, the Luxemburg-Casco teacher, agrees it's fair to consider benefits as part of teachers' total compensation.

"That's what the School Board has to pay us," he said.

He said teachers have placed heavy emphasis on benefits when negotiating new deals with their districts.

"We've got good benefits because we realize when we negotiate a contract our benefits aren't taxed," Staege said.

Compared to others

Still, he thinks factory workers and others who work for large companies have comparable benefits and don't have to invest their own money to keep themselves qualified for their jobs.

Except for a few special circumstances, districts typically don't pay for teachers to go to graduate school. Graduate credits help teachers maintain their certification but also can make them eligible for pay raises.

Other teachers think that even with benefits figured in, compensation still isn't adequate.

"I still don't think it levels out to other entry-level jobs," said Kathy Leadley, a Green Bay teacher for 30 years. "Our salaries have been relatively low in comparison to our education, so it still doesn't even out."

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brand-name non-formulary drugs.

Dental insurance

- **Coverage:** 100 percent for two exams and prophylaxis each year; 80 percent for other restorative or prosthetic work; 50 percent for orthodontic work. \$1,500 maximum coverage per year per person.

- **Premiums:** Single, \$29.84 per month in 2002-03, district pays 100 percent; family, \$88.05 per month in 2002-03, district pays 100 percent.

John Wilson, the Green Bay district's assistant superintendent for human resources, said the coverage levels have not changed since 1990, although the plan did switch to a PPO. Also, additional premium was added for the traditional plan and the deductibles were negotiated.

"This is a premium plan," Wilson said.



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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 21, 2003

Day doesn't end for most teachers when bell rings

Taking work home common in profession

By Kelley Bruss

kbruss@greenbaypressgazette.com

Teachers think some people are jealous of their ample time off in the summers and throughout the school year.

Their response: People who think that way are jealous of something that doesn't exist.

"First of all, it's not nine months, it's nine-and-a-half months, if we want to quibble over two weeks — but I do," said Kathy Romsos, president of the Denmark Education Association.

Constantly having to defend her profession has put the edge in her tone, she said.

There's no question many consider teachers' work schedules enviable.

"The overall general bias is: 'Well, you know, they have three months off,'" said Denmark mom Nancy Lancelle.

Lancelle said she's not in the "they-have-so-much-time-off" camp. She thinks teachers put in many hours outside of school that more than make up for those days off.

Educators think those outside the field have no idea the time — evenings, weekends and, yes, summer days — teachers invest in class preparation, grading, special projects and their own education to keep teaching licenses current.

"I could put my hand on a stack of Bibles and tell you there's probably a handful of teachers who don't go home with something" to work on every night, said Kathy Leadley, a 30-year Green Bay teacher. "The taxpayers are getting value for their dollar."

Base pay in Brown, Door, Kewaunee and Oconto counties ranged from \$24,000 to \$28,000 in 2000-01. Many teachers say that isn't enough for employees with bachelor's degrees.

But critics contend the pay is fine when you consider a teacher doesn't

Special report: Teachers' salaries

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work a full year.

A typical teacher contract calls for 190 days of employment, 7½ hours a day. But few in education think those are the only hours most teachers put in.

"A 10-hour work day is commonplace," Romsos said. "You know, the papers don't check themselves. ... You either stay here or you haul it home."

It's not unfair to consider work schedule when trying to determine whether teachers are fairly compensated, said John Wilson, Green Bay's assistant superintendent for human resources.

But he said painting teachers' habits with a broad brush doesn't work, either.

"Like other careers, you have teachers that work 12- and 14-hour days, and you have teachers that work 7½-hour days," Wilson said. "You have teachers that work 10 months, and you have teachers that are devoting their lives to teaching."

Summers off?

Most teachers have much of June, all of July and the first part of August off work. Some use that time to prepare for the next year.

John Dunlap, a math teacher at Green Bay Southwest High School for almost 20 years, works every summer — and he thinks a lot of other teachers do the same.

His past summer jobs have included unloading semis for ShopKo, painting, custodial work and teaching summer school.

Jonathan Jagler is a first-year math teacher at Southwest. His summer plans this year include teaching driver's education full time.

Jagler said it's not that he and his wife, who's also a teacher, can't make it on their salaries.

"The main reason I chose to work in the summer is to do the little extra things," he said.

Teachers also often use the summer months to take graduate classes. They need continuing education to keep their licenses current. But additional education also can help them move to new lanes — pay levels — on their salary schedules.

Green Bay parent Gary Doucette thinks fixating on summers off isn't a fair perspective for viewing teacher pay.

"They still have to go back to school to keep their knowledge base current," he said. Most local districts don't pay for a teacher's continuing education.

Night work

Teachers say they're working plenty in the evenings, too, despite their official end of the day around 4 p.m.

"Every night I bring papers home to correct," Dunlap said. "I spend many a night with a bread board on my lap, grading papers in front of the TV.

"If you took what I spend at night and start spreading that out, I would think it would be pretty equal to a full year."

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Because others don't see all that teachers do, it's hard for them to grasp the time commitment that goes with the job, said Dick Feldhausen, executive director of the Green Bay Education Association.

"You have to either be married to a teacher or be a teacher to really understand," he said.

Luxemburg-Casco High School teacher Pat Staege said teachers probably invest at least another month of work outside of the days prescribed by their contracts.

"This summer I have to go back to summer school to renew my license," he said.

Still, he doesn't deny the work schedule is a benefit.

"To have July and August off in Wisconsin is like a dream," Staege said.

Fair, unfair

Luxemburg-Casco Superintendent Pat Saunders thinks the debate over teacher pay as it relates to work hours is fruitless.

"Fairness is always going to be in the eye of the beholder," he said.

It would be presumptuous for him to decide whether a banker or a CEO is compensated fairly for the work he or she puts in, he said.

"I don't know diddly about a bank and I know less about a CEO of an organization," Saunders said.

He wishes people outside education would take the same cautious approach to ideas about teachers' work and pay.

"The reality is, there are people on all sides of it who would say, 'That's fair, that's unfair,'" Saunders said.

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 20, 2003

Teachers fear salary crisis



Jonathan Jagler teaches his Algebra I class recently at Green Bay Southwest High School. Jagler said it was the work, not the money, that drove him to become a teacher. Evan Siegle /Press-Gazette

Pay limits keep taxes down, may drive educators away

By Kelley Bruss

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Jonathan Jagler knows numbers, so evaluating his salary potential as a high school teacher wasn't hard. "There are hundreds of other things I could do with a math degree and be paid more," said Jagler, a first-year teacher at Green Bay Southwest High School.

But it was the work — not the pay — that drew him, and he's comfortable with his choice.

Teachers on the other end of their careers, though, worry that not enough young people will make the choice Jagler did. They fear the state law limiting teacher pay increases will prevent some of their own best students from choosing teaching as a career.

Dick Feldhausen, executive director of the Green Bay Education Association, said older teachers also watch as younger peers spend three, four or five years in the field, then leave to do something else.

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"They may love teaching as a profession, but they can't live on it," Feldhausen said.

He and others blame Wisconsin's 10-year-old Qualified Economic Offer law for that.

The law in essence gives school boards the authority to limit the district's total spending on teacher salary and benefits to annual increases of 3.8 percent. It was implemented, in part, to provide property-tax relief.

The QEO is making headlines again as state lawmakers grapple with a \$3.2 billion deficit in the state's general fund. Gov. Jim Doyle proposed repealing the law, calling it unfair. But Thursday the QEO repeal was among 21 policy items the Joint Finance Committee removed from the budget it is preparing for the Legislature.

School aids and tax credits made up about 45 percent of all state general-fund appropriations in the last budget cycle.

In the decade before the QEO, increases in base pay offered by area districts ranged from 3 percent to 8 percent per year. In the decade since the QEO was created, 1 percent increases to base pay were high in many districts, which saw increases of just a fraction of a percent some years.

To teachers, this is the clearest indication that something must be done to improve their pay.

"Teachers should not have to carry the whole burden of keeping taxes down," said Kathy Leadley, a Green Bay teacher for 30 years and a member of the executive board for the Green Bay union. "The burden has fallen on us for the last 10 years."

The 2002-03 state average for starting pay is \$28,062; the high is \$32,991, and the low is \$24,660, according to Wisconsin Association of School Boards data.

Starting pay in Green Bay is \$27,633 this school year. That pay has gone up 1.5 percent or less each year in the past decade.

But the increases in base pay, which affect all other levels on teacher-salary schedules, aren't the whole picture.

Teachers also get pay increases for additional years of service and for additional education. Looking at individuals' pay over the past seven years:

- For teachers in their first decade in the field, annual increases of 4 percent or 5 percent are not uncommon, and increases as high as 10 percent can be found as teachers get additional education.

Special report: Teachers' salaries

Since the enactment in 1993 of the Qualified Economic Offer — a law designed in part to keep property taxes from increasing too quickly — educators have argued that increases in teacher salaries don't reflect the work teachers do and the respect they deserve.

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What is QEO?

QEO stands for Qualified Economic Offer. The state enacted QEO in 1993.

The QEO is one part of a so-called "three-legged stool" for school funding. The other two parts are revenue caps, which limit districts' annual budgets, and two-thirds funding, the state's commitment to pick up two-thirds of the total cost of K-12 education.

• Teachers with more than 20 years of experience and high education levels tend to see raises in two-year spurts. One year the raise may be less than 1 percent; the next it may be 3 percent or 4 percent.

To Gary Doucette, a Green Bay parent, it doesn't appear that teachers are hurting.

"It seems to me that they do really well," said Doucette, whose son attends Green Bay East High School.

Still, he agrees with teachers that the QEO is unfair because it singles out one profession.

Not all parents are convinced teacher pay is adequate.

"Probably not," said Kelly Thiry, whose daughter attends Washington Middle School. "Our teachers are expected to do a lot for some of our kids where there's not a lot of parental involvement."

She argued that most people don't see all the time teachers put in outside of class and all of their own money they spend on incentives or surprises for students.

Nancy Lancelle, a Denmark mom, thinks that's true. For a while, she lived across from a school.

"I could tell you the teachers that were there an hour early and the last ones to leave," she said.

She also assumes some teachers put in minimum effort.

"I think as with any profession you probably have a high level of differences between teachers," Lancelle said.

Pay raises

Salary schedules — charts that outline teacher pay based on years of experience and education — increase pay three ways:

- For each additional year of service, teachers move another "step" on the schedule, to a new pay level. These are generally viewed as cost-of-living increases. Often the percentage increases are highest early in the salary schedule.
- With additional education, teachers can move to a new "lane" on the schedule. Different districts offer lane changes for different credits and degrees. For example, lane changes might be available when an individual obtains 15 graduate credits, is half way to a master's degree or earns a master's degree.
- When the base pay is increased, that increase is factored through all the other steps and lanes in the salary schedule — every figure on the schedule is connected through a formula to the base pay.

The options for raises mean individuals may get raises that top 10 percent some years, depending on the raise built in from one step to the next, what additional education the teacher has completed or a raise applied to the entire schedule.

Looking solely at starting pay shows a different part of the picture: It's not keeping pace with cost-of-living increases.

When Green Bay's starting pay is adjusted for inflation, the pay decreases as much as 2 percent each year from 1993-94 to 2000-01.

Under the QEO, districts may prevent contract negotiations from going to arbitration on economic issues by imposing a QEO — offering total salary and benefit increases of 3.8 percent.

Under the law, a district also may choose to negotiate contracts using collective bargaining.

Following are a few online resources related to QEO:

- Department of Public Instruction summary of the governor's proposed budget as it relates to education:
www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/pb/2003sb44.html.
- Wisconsin Education Association Council resource page on QEO:
www.weac.org/Capitol/qeopage.htm.
- Wisconsin Association of School Boards, 2003-05 state budget issue paper on QEO:
www.wasb.org/legislative/qeocollbarg.pdf.

"If we assume that they (salaries) were adequate at some point in time, they haven't even kept up with inflation, and that's not right," said LeRoy Meles, superintendent of the Denmark School District.

Educators know this is not an easy issue or, in a struggling economy, an easy time to tackle it.

"We try to get the word out, but sometimes you get labeled as a whiner," said Scott McPherson, a first-grade teacher at Denmark.

Why it matters

Administrators have double worries about pay issues: They must develop budgets that will accommodate the increases teachers are seeking. They also want to offer pay that's competitive enough to attract the best new teachers to their district.

"I think all of us have concerns about that entry-level pay for teachers," Green Bay Superintendent Daniel Nerad said. "A very problematic scenario for me is to have too many of those 19- to 20-year-olds make a decision: 'Why bother to go into education?'"

Pat Staege, a Denmark High School teacher for 29 years, estimated about 20 percent of his high school graduates going on to college used to entertain the idea of being teachers.

"Now it's about 5 percent. ... If you want to attract the best and brightest, you have to pay," Staege said. "The best and the brightest figure out the wage difference pretty quick."

People shouldn't be surprised that pay is an issue for teachers, said De Pere Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

"For any job, pay's an issue," he said. "And every industry will make the same argument: If you want a better work force, you have to have better pay or at least adequate pay."

Jagler, the new Southwest teacher, admits pay is important. He took his Green Bay job because it offered higher pay than some others he considered in the area.

But in terms of his career choice, "it's not one of the main concerns," he said.

In college, his peers would point out he could make more in other math-related fields.

"I said, 'Well, are you going to be happy sitting behind a desk all day crunching numbers? Because I wouldn't be,'" he said.

Jagler has been married less than a year. His wife, Tara, is a third-year teacher.

"It's hard sometimes because I'm just out of college — I've got school loans, car payments," he said. "We're having to save a little bit to get done what we want to do, but we're not struggling."

A question of respect

Jagler's message to the public isn't about money.

"People just need to respect their kids' teachers," he said.

To other teachers, their pay level is a sign of society's continued low respect for the work that they do.

"They read in the media that teachers are respected, but when they look at their paychecks, they don't feel respected," said Keith Patt, president of the Green Bay Education Association.

Leadley has a list that shows how average teacher pay compares to averages in other fields. This particular nationwide list puts average teacher pay at \$43,000, behind police officers, accountants,

architects and engineers.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the Green Bay metropolitan area, average pay for secondary teachers was \$43,030 in 2001.

That was lower than average pay for workers such as accountants, engineers, librarians, registered nurses and dental hygienists, and higher than for workers such as graphic designers, social workers, civil drafters and public-relations specialists.

Comparing teacher pay to pay in other fields may be interesting but it isn't valuable, Nerad said.

"There's always a tit for tat," he said. "My question is: What value do we want to place toward this profession?"

Teaching "should be very much in the mix of all the most important professions in the world," he said. "I don't think a community over time can afford to think about this from the perspective of: What's the cheapest way to do this?"

Teachers versus taxes

John Dunlap, another math teacher at Southwest, understands that when people look at their property-tax bills they see the largest chunk of the money goes to schools.

"That makes us the biggest target," Dunlap said.

Salaries and benefits for all district employees typically consume 80 percent or more of school districts' budgets.

Conflict is likely to remain as long as roughly one-quarter to one-third of school funding continues to come from local property taxes, said Kathy Romsos, president of the Denmark Education Association.

Wisconsin has committed to paying for two-thirds of total public education costs, although the state's ability to stick to that commitment is now in question.

"Taxes are high: Teachers are overpaid," Romsos said. "That's just what their perception is, I think."

Doucette, the Green Bay parent, wouldn't quite make that statement, but he definitely connects the two issues.

"The bottom line is that the teacher doesn't receive pay until first it's extracted from my pocketbook," Doucette said.

Somehow, he said, a balance must be struck that would do right by everyone involved.

"I don't think they're trying to take taxpayers for a ride," Doucette said. "Like everyone else, they would like to receive more. I certainly would like to receive more as a data-processing professional."

A fair solution "would respect all parties," Villarruel said. "You have employees, you have the board and you have the taxpayers. What that equilibrium is, I don't know."

When Meles hears people say it isn't fair how much teachers are paid, he has a standard response.

"I turn that around and I say, 'You tell me what's fair and how would you make that determination?'" Meles said. "They can't answer that."

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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 20, 2003

Changes in school funding possible

State looks at QEO, funding promise, revenue caps

By Kelley Bruss

kbruss@greenbaypressgazette.com

Gov. Jim Doyle's 2003-05 budget proposal included a repeal of the decade-old Qualified Economic Offer law, which essentially limits teachers' salary increases.

But the governor's plan hit a roadblock Thursday when the Joint Finance Committee removed the QEO recommendation — and 20 other items identified as policy issues — from the budget it is preparing for the Legislature to consider.

"Governor Doyle has indicated he will appoint a commission to address school financing as a whole," Assembly Speaker John Gard and Senate Majority Leader Mary Panzer said in a written statement. "We believe the commission is the proper forum for a discussion of the role of the QEO."

Doyle was disappointed with the move.

"The QEO hamstrings school districts across Wisconsin and has made it very difficult for many schools to attract and retain good teachers," he said.

In the midst of a state financial crisis, Doyle also has said it's unlikely the state will be able to uphold its promise to fund two-thirds of the costs of public education.

The governor promised to convene a group this fall to look at the state's total school-funding system, which includes the QEO; district revenue caps, which limit budget growth; and two-thirds state funding.

"Obviously, all of that will trickle down to how we bargain and compensate teachers," Green Bay School District Superintendent Daniel Nerad said.

Green Bay parent Gary Doucette agrees with teachers on one point: The QEO is unfair in that it singles out one group. For him, the question is how to balance teachers' and taxpayers' needs.

"How do we pay teachers fairly without making it so onerous on taxpayers that there's a revolt?" Doucette said.

Special report: Teachers' salaries

Since the enactment in 1993 of the Qualified Economic Offer — a law designed in part to keep property taxes from increasing too quickly — educators have argued that increases in teacher salaries don't reflect the work teachers do and the respect they deserve.

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Whatever the end results of the budget deliberations, Nerad said, all three parts of the school-funding formula need to be addressed equally.

"If one goes, such as the QEO, adjustments have to be made in others," Nerad said.

Green Bay Education Association Executive Director Dick Feldhausen agreed.

"The state has to change the way they fund schools," he said. "It's a simple as that, and that's going to be the test of the next two years."

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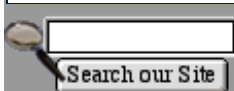
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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 20, 2003

Teaching has no price tag, many say

Teachers: QEO more about respect than paycheck

By Kelley Bruss

kbruss@greenbaypressgazette.com

Talking much about money feels vulgar to many teachers.

They'd rather discuss their classes, their kids, their projects, the differences they're making in schools across Northeastern Wisconsin.

"I hate to put a big emphasis on salaries," said Green Bay Southwest High School math teacher John Dunlap. "You don't go into teaching to make money. ... I'd like to make a difference somewhere along the line."

But at the same time, some teachers say they're fed up with their pay, with a state law that has limited increases and with the public's lack of knowledge about the issue.

So they step up and speak out. And they cringe when people say teaching shouldn't be about the money.

Scott McPherson, a Denmark teacher with less than a decade of experience, said new teachers are definitely interested in pay. Other, detailed parts of the contract outlining benefits are less meaningful early in a career.

"If you look at anything, you look at pay," McPherson said. "But you're not supposed to as a teacher."

Caring about money doesn't mean they don't care about their work, teachers said.

Kathy Leadley, a 30-year Green Bay physical-education teacher, said it's hard to put a price tag on the value of teachers' work.

She talks about teachers remembering kids' birthdays, hugging them when they're sad and celebrating their accomplishments.

"Those are the types of things that you can't put a dollar value on — how teachers care for kids," Leadley said. "It takes an emotional toll on you sometimes ... because you care so much."

Nancy Lancelle has two children in the Denmark School District and two

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at Syble Hopp School. She said teachers' work is uniquely important.

"Just for their personal feelings and caring about students, you can't put a price tag on that," Lancelle said.

She knows for some people the money still may be a deterrent but thinks others will choose the field because they want to help children.

"It's like any profession," Lancelle said. "It's not for everybody."

Targets of disrespect?

But teachers feel their life investments into education are going unappreciated by people who don't have the same attitude as Lancelle.

And pay is perhaps the biggest reason they believe that.

Green Bay Education Association President Keith Patt said the Qualified Economic Offer law has had a devastating impact on teacher income.

"And the impact on morale has been unbelievable," Patt said.

"Because, despite what the public believes, that teachers are respected, they simply aren't."

To him, the QEO is the key to proving the disrespect leveled at teachers.

"If we're respected, why are we, of all employees ... the only individuals who were selected to have their salaries capped?" he said.

While they wouldn't wish the caps on anyone else, Dunlap said teachers might have responded differently to the QEO "if it would have been across the whole state, affected all state employees."

Leadley said teachers want to be convinced that they have support and appreciation for their efforts. Their campaign against the QEO isn't just about money.

"We're asking for more salary, etc., but to have the public behind us, to have them know we're doing the best for their kids would be a wish of mine," Leadley said.

Loving the job

Teachers say they're not in it for the money.

"I would take whatever money they would throw at me," Dunlap said. "I love what I'm doing."

He's not sorry he chose the job, and he thinks all workers are responsible for living within their means, whatever those means are.

But he worries about the candidate pool for the future.

"If I was coming out of college now and I had a nice background in math and computers, I might question going into teaching," Dunlap said.

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 20, 2003

Working with the QEO doesn't qualify as simple math

By Kelley Bruss

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Wisconsin's decade-old Qualified Economic Offer law prevents contract negotiations from going to arbitration on economic issues if a district offers total salary and benefit increases of 3.8 percent.

The law isn't often imposed — districts and unions usually come to voluntary agreements. But some of those agreements have been just a little higher than 3.8 percent and some have even been less than 3.8 percent.

The QEO is one part of a so-called "three-legged stool" for school funding. The two other parts are revenue caps, which in essence limit increases in local property taxes, and two-thirds funding — the state's commitment to pick up two-thirds of the total cost of K-12 education.

Gov. Jim Doyle has said the state likely will not be able to meet its two-thirds obligation in the next two-year budget.

The percentage the state pays to individual districts varies. "Property-rich" districts typically get a lower percentage of state funding.

As an example, Green Bay's 2003-04 budget includes four revenue sources: 62.6 percent from the state, 27.6 percent from local property taxes, 8.6 percent from the federal government and 1.2 percent from other sources.

Doyle also has asked that the QEO be repealed but that request was stalled Thursday when members of the Joint Finance Committee removed the QEO language from the budget they're preparing for the Legislature.

The QEO has slowed growth in teachers' salaries, statistics show. In the decade before QEO, base pay for teachers increased 3 percent to 8 percent a year in area districts. Post-QEO, some increases haven't hit 1 percent.

"Is the QEO fair? No," said Denmark teacher Pat Staeger. "Our nation had the best eight years of its economy ever, and our salaries, next to inflation, dropped."

But the QEO hasn't been the only problem. With health-care costs

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soaring, large portions of the percentage increase teachers are given each year go toward benefits, not salary increases.

When a district and a union announce an annual increase, that percent is the increase to the total expenditures on teachers' salaries and benefits.

To compute the percentage increase:

- Districts first determine how much will be needed to continue to pay for benefits.
- Next, districts look at all current teachers, move them to the next step on the salary schedule and count those built-in raises as part of the salary percentage of the QEO.
- If a district is imposing a QEO and those first two amounts don't equal a 3.8 percent increase, any remaining money to get to 3.8 percent would be added into the salary schedule.

The base would increase and all other steps and lanes — connected by formulas to the base — would, too.

But if the benefit costs and step increases together equal 3.8 percent, there would be no increase to the base pay or to any other parts of the salary schedule.

Districts can offer increases that are higher than 3.8 percent, and many in this area have done so. In those cases, the same three steps are taken to get to whatever percentage the district is offering as a total increase.

Green Bay Superintendent Daniel Nerad said insurance costs have been a difficult factor.

"We just can't continue to see these year after year increases that we've had," he said. "Clearly that has an impact on what we can put into teacher salaries."

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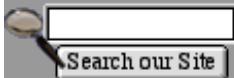
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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 20, 2003

State legislators speak out on QEO, teacher pay

Press-Gazette

The following state legislators responded to the Green Bay Press-Gazette's request for comments on two questions related to the Qualified Economic Offer law and teacher pay:

- Sen. Robert Cowles, R-Allouez
- Rep. John Gard, R-Peshtigo
- Sen. Dave Hansen, D-Green Bay
- Rep. Judy Krawczyk, R-Green Bay
- Sen. Alan Lasee, R-Rockland
- Rep. Frank Lasee, R-Bellevue
- Rep. Phil Montgomery, R-Ashwaubenon
- Rep. Karl Van Roy, R-Howard
- Rep. Becky Weber, R-Green Bay

Do you agree with the governor's proposal to get rid of the QEO? Why or why not?

Hansen: To single out one group of people and deny them the same ability to support their families like everyone else is unfair. Abolishing the QEO simply restores to teachers the same rights and responsibilities as every other public-sector employee in the state of Wisconsin. It's an issue of fairness and consistency.

Krawczyk: I believe the QEO needs to be maintained. It's important to remember that when the QEO law was adopted, property-tax increases were occurring in excess of 10 percent each year.

Without providing some sort of salary/compensation cap, the cost of salary/compensation could begin eating into operational budgets for school districts.

Special report: Teachers' salaries

Since the enactment in 1993 of the Qualified Economic Offer — a law designed in part to keep property taxes from increasing too quickly — educators have argued that increases in teacher salaries don't reflect the work teachers do and the respect they deserve.

The Press-Gazette examines the issue in a two-part series beginning today.

To read Day 2 stories, click on the following links:

- [Trends in teacher pay in Northeastern Wisconsin](#)
- [Teacher benefits](#)
- [Teacher work day](#)

To read Day 1 stories, click on the following links:

- [Teachers fear salary crisis](#)
- [School funding changes](#)
- [Teaching has no price tag](#)
- [A QEO explainer](#)

Much of the current opposition to the QEO is in regard to teachers not being able to receive pay increases because their pay increases are being eaten up by increasing health-insurance costs. Legislation is currently being proposed that will reduce those health-insurance costs, with the result being an increase in teacher salaries.

A. Lasee: I disagree with Governor Doyle's proposal to eliminate the QEO. The state imposed the limits when it committed to paying two-thirds of the cost of public schools in an attempt to balance the needs of teachers and property taxpayers. Since teacher salaries make up about 80 percent of a school district's budget, the QEO is critical in helping to rein in school budgets and spiraling property taxes.

F. Lasee: The QEO is the only tool school boards have to keep salaries from increasing uncontrollably. Direct negotiation with the local unions resulted in much greater increases (along with corresponding greater increases in property taxes) before the QEO. The only other option is arbitration, which always favors the employees.

I do not agree with the governor's proposal to get rid of the QEO. First of all, that's a policy item, which has no bearing on the state budget. Secondly, the governor promised not to raise taxes. Eliminating the QEO will put more pressure on school districts to spend more, which will mean higher property taxes.

How should districts and the state balance the competing demands of teachers looking at their paychecks and taxpayers looking at their property-tax bills?

Hansen: The question suggests that the issue is simply a choice between teachers wanting more money and taxpayers wanting lower tax bills. Such an argument ignores a very important component to the debate and that is the question of how do we provide the best education possible for our children at a cost we can afford?

If quality teachers can make more money in another district or another state, I am concerned the long-term quality of our children's education will suffer.

We also need to recognize that quality schools have a positive impact on property values. The issue of property taxes should not be solely linked to the QEO, but to the overall reform of the school-financing system that the governor has promised to address after work on the state budget is completed.

Krawczyk: I think the term "balance" is the key to this question. The state has assumed paying for two-thirds of the cost of local education in part to help hold down the cost of education at the local level. Governor Doyle's proposed reduction in shared revenue for municipalities will require even more balancing since additional state costs are unfortunately being shifted to property taxpayers. This is another reason why eliminating the QEO at this point in time is not in the best interest of property taxpayers.

A. Lasee: The state has a \$3.2 billion deficit. I recently voted against pay increases for state workers. Fringe-benefit costs for state and local employees are going through the roof. Northeastern Wisconsin has lost thousands of jobs in a few short months. Now is not the time for the elimination of the QEO.

F. Lasee: School boards should not have to balance the "competing demands" of teachers and taxpayers, because the taxpayers — the voters — are the boss. If school districts think they need more money than revenue caps allow, then they can ask for a referendum. If the voters agree, they'll get it. If not, then they won't....

We spend more than other states who do just as well or better than we do academically. More money does not necessarily mean better education.

Five legislators sent one answer to both questions. Their responses follow.

Cowles: When the state was committed to paying two-thirds of school costs, the qualified economic offer (QEO) was important to help provide an assurance that those dollars would be distributed fairly between salaries and educational programs.

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Now that the governor has backed away from the state's two-thirds commitment, in essence giving more local control and responsibility to school boards, I believe it also makes sense to give school boards more control over negotiating salaries. Although many critics focus on the QEO as a limiting factor on salaries, in fact it has also played a role in establishing a floor for salaries. Eliminating the QEO can provide more flexibility to school boards to manage their own budgets.

Gard: Thursday, the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau released its list of nonfiscal policy in the proposed 2003-05 budget.

The Fiscal Bureau has determined that the way Governor Doyle drafted the Qualified Economic Offer provision, it meets the standard for nonfiscal policy.

Governor Doyle has indicated he will appoint a commission to address school financing as a whole.

I believe the commission is the proper forum for a discussion of the role of the QEO, revenue caps, two-thirds funding and the relationship these policies have to our overall goals of quality education and protecting taxpayers.

Montgomery: I do not support Governor Doyle's plan to eliminate the Qualified Economic Offer while keeping revenue caps in place.

Spending caps limit the amount of money school districts can raise through state aids and the property tax. Right now, we cannot afford to remove the caps, and I fear any additional increase in teachers' salaries would come directly from funds allocated for students.

We've hit the ceiling — the state can no longer support the financial weight of our current school-financing system.

Teaching is a noble profession, but any pay system that provides workers with an automatic pay increase without taking into account the state's economic condition or teacher performance is inherently flawed.

Van Roy: I think we are all agreed that we need to develop an alternative mechanism for school funding. The governor has called for a task force to study the issue and develop a plan. Until that happens, the QEO is a working model that should be retained.

Wisconsin is one of the highest-taxed states in the nation. Our residents are concerned most about two things: creating jobs and holding the line on taxes. Taxpayers are already stretched beyond their ability to pay.

Removing the QEO without having a comprehensive solution to take its place will no doubt increase property taxes even more.

Weber: I understand that teachers currently feel singled out with QEO, and I am always willing to explore better options in funding our education system.

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How a teacher salary schedule works

Salary schedules are charts that outline teacher pay based on years of experience and education.

Every district has its own schedule, negotiated with its teachers union. A schedule allows teachers to earn raises three ways.

■ **Steps:** For each additional year of work, a teacher moves down another step on the schedule, to a new pay level. Some districts have a limited number of steps on their schedules. Others, such as Green Bay, have an infinite number of steps.

■ **Lanes:** By earning additional graduate credits or advanced degrees, teachers can move into new lanes of the salary schedule. Different districts offer lane changes for different amounts of education.

■ **Base pay:** When the base is increased, that increase is factored through all the other steps and lanes in the salary schedule — every figure on the schedule is connected through a formula to the base.

How it works

Look at the example of Green Bay's salary schedules for 2001-02 and 2002-03. (Only a portion of each schedule is shown.) Three scenarios demonstrate how teachers earn raises by moving through the schedule:

■ **Teacher A** had a bachelor's degree in 2001-02. Before the next school year, this person completed 15 graduate credits. The teacher's salary goes from step four in the bachelor's lane to step five in the bachelor's plus 15 credits lane.

■ **Teacher B** finished 15 credits beyond a master's degree between 2001-02 and 2002-03. That teacher's salary would move from the 18th step in the master's degree lane to the 19th step in the master's plus 15 credits lane.

■ **Teacher C** has a master's degree plus 45 credits and has no more lanes to move into. That teacher's salary moves from the 39th step of the last lane to the 40th step of the last lane.

2001-2002 Green Bay teacher salary schedule

Step	Lanes						
	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's +15 credits	Half master's	Master's degree	Master's +15 credits	Master's +30 credits	Master's +45 credits
1	27,233	28,050	28,322	29,412	30,229	31,046	31,863
2	28,595	29,412	29,820	31,046	31,863	32,680	33,497
3	31,318	32,135	32,816	34,314	35,131	35,948	36,765
4	32,680	33,497	34,314	35,948	36,765	37,582	38,399
5	34,041	34,858	35,811	37,582	38,399	39,216	40,033

Teacher A
8% raise

16	45,098	45,915	47,821	50,544	51,361	52,178	52,995
17	45,479	46,296	48,202	50,926	51,743	52,560	53,377
18	45,860	46,677	48,584	51,307	52,124	52,941	53,758
19	46,242	47,059	48,965	51,688	52,505	53,322	54,139
20	46,623	47,440	49,346	52,069	52,886	53,703	54,520

Teacher B
4% raise

36	52,123	53,540	55,446	58,170	58,987	59,804	60,621
37	53,104	53,921	55,828	58,551	59,368	60,185	61,002
38	53,486	54,303	56,209	58,932	59,749	60,566	61,383
39	53,867	54,684	56,590	59,313	60,130	60,947	61,764
40	54,248	55,065	56,971	59,695	60,512	61,329	62,146

Teacher C
2% raise

2002-2003 Green Bay teacher salary schedule

Step	Lanes						
	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's +15 credits	Half master's	Master's degree	Master's +15 credits	Master's +30 credits	Master's +45 credits
1	27,633	28,462	28,738	29,844	30,673	31,502	32,331
2	29,015	29,844	30,258	31,512	32,331	33,160	33,989
3	31,778	32,607	33,298	34,818	35,647	36,476	37,305
4	33,160	33,989	34,818	36,475	37,305	38,134	38,963
5	34,541	35,370	36,337	38,131	38,963	39,792	40,621

16	45,760	46,589	48,524	51,287	52,116	52,945	53,774
17	46,147	46,976	48,910	51,674	52,503	53,332	54,161
18	46,534	47,363	49,297	52,061	52,890	53,719	54,548
19	46,921	47,750	49,684	52,447	53,276	54,105	54,934
20	47,308	48,137	50,071	52,834	53,663	54,492	55,321

36	53,497	54,326	56,261	59,024	59,853	60,682	61,511
37	53,884	54,713	56,648	59,411	60,240	61,069	61,898
38	54,271	55,100	57,035	59,798	60,627	61,456	62,285
39	54,658	55,487	57,421	60,185	61,014	61,843	62,672
40	55,045	55,874	57,808	60,572	61,401	62,230	63,059

Teacher pay increases

While base pay increases have slowed significantly since the Qualified Economic Offer became law a decade ago, teachers are still able to earn raises by moving through salary schedules. This chart shows the percent of pay increases of six Green Bay-area teachers in the last seven years.

Teacher	Pay in 1995-96	Percent of pay increase						Pay in 2001-02
		1995-96 to 96-97	1996-97 to 97-98	1997-98 to 98-99	1998-99 to 99-00	1999-00 to 00-01	2000-01 to 01-02	
A	\$48,837	4.05%	0.60%	6.79%	0.64%	1.75%	0.68%	\$56,283
B	44,210	2.05	0.00	9.36	4.12	3.17	0.00	52,994
C	53,083	3.20	0.45	4.43	0.47	4.18	0.74	60,593
D	24,740	8.59	9.53	7.14	9.59	12.68	4.17	40,550
E	22,283	5.23	6.40	6.29	7.59	4.79	5.52	31,550
F	25,335	12.52	6.96	15.48	4.35	8.02	4.28	41,385

Teacher A: 30 years in Green Bay; master's degree.

Teacher B: 30 years in Denmark; master's degree.

Teacher C: 30 years in Ashwaubenon; master's degree.

Teacher D: Seven years in Green Bay; master's degree as of 2001.

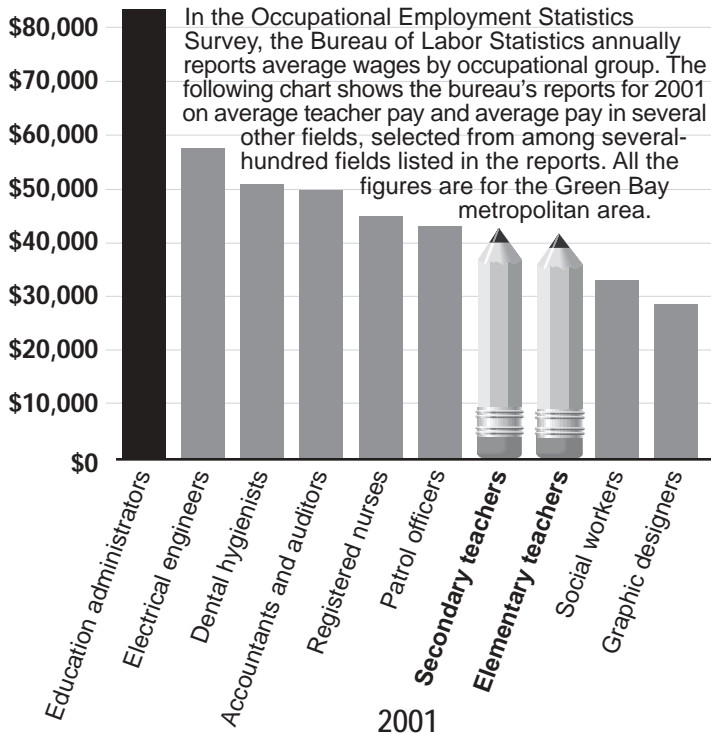
Teacher E: Seven years in Denmark; bachelor's degree.

Teacher F: Seven years in Ashwaubenon; master's degree as of 1998.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Press-Gazette

Green Bay average pay comparisons





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LOCAL NEWS

Posted June 05, 2003

Villarruel's ex-employer denies claim of illegal payroll activity

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

The Ashland School District has denied a claim from a former employee who accused the district's one-time Superintendent Ben Villarruel — now superintendent of the De Pere School District — of forcing illegal payroll activities.

The school district also denied claims of wrongful discharge and creating intolerable working conditions.

Belinda Miller, a former payroll benefits specialist, made the claims in a civil lawsuit in February. The district responded to the claims March 15, and there have been no further filings in the case, according to records of the Ashland County Circuit Court.

According to the civil suit, the illegal payroll activities began in 1998. Villarruel was hired away from Ashland to be the De Pere superintendent in 2002. Villarruel replaced former De Pere Superintendent Richard Yenchesky after the De Pere School Board paid Yenchesky \$325,000 as part of a separation agreement in 2001.

The suit alleges that Villarruel and Bonnie Stegmann, Ashland business manager, ordered Miller to falsify the payroll records of a full-time custodian. Miller said she was asked to unlawfully classify a full-time worker as an independent contractor. She claims that at times hourly workers were not paid for time worked, were not paid at an overtime rate when they qualified for it and were forced to take compensatory time off in lieu of wages.

Miller, who resigned from her job in 2001, is asking to be reinstated to the position and to be paid damages for past, present and future lost earnings, attorney's fees and compensatory damage for mental suffering, fright, distress, anxiety and emotional trauma.

An Ashland schools' spokesman would not comment Tuesday, and a lawyer for the district could not be reached.

The schools' response asks the court to dismiss the suit and require Miller to pay the district's court costs.

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LOCAL NEWS

Posted June 08, 2003

Area schools avoid cuts — for now

Most districts tighten belts for short term

By Kelley Bruss and Andy Behrendt

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As Brown County school districts weigh possible reductions in state funding, most aren't talking about cutting programs — yet.

Most districts hope to squeeze by this year with short-term solutions. Unlike some school districts across the state, Brown County districts haven't yet issued teacher layoff notices or ended existing programs because of the state budget crisis.

If deeper cuts need to be made, including eliminating entire programs and laying off staff, districts hope to use this school year to consult with the public and set priorities.

The Legislature's Joint Finance Committee last week adopted its version of the state's two-year budget, including its school-funding plan.

Some district administrators are calling the committee's budget proposal a reduction for area school districts — and others are calling it an increase.

The proposal includes more in general school aid than the budget Gov. Jim Doyle proposed. But neither proposal meets the state's previous two-thirds commitment to K-12 school funding.

The finance committee's plan limits districts' ability to make up lost state revenue through local property taxes. Its per-student increases in state aid are about half of what districts had been expecting, meaning district's allowable revenue will be limited.

With districts facing 5 percent or higher increases for fixed costs, the proposal amounts to "decreased capacity" for school districts, said Green Bay Superintendent Daniel Nerad.

The Legislature and governor still must act on the budget, but regardless of the final outcome, administrators are expecting reductions — and the tough decisions that must follow.

"What we're trying to do is retain staff positions to the extent that possibly we can — that's the number one priority," said Denmark Superintendent LeRoy Meles. "But I'm as much or more concerned about the second year than I am the first year.

Budgets compared

The Joint Finance Committee Wednesday approved its version of a 2003-05 state budget.

Here's how the Republican-led committee's plan compares to Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle's plan for public school funding.

Doyle's budget: Increases state aid by \$100 million but falls short of covering two-thirds of the cost of K-12 education. Does not limit ability to raise revenue through local property taxes.

Finance committee's budget: Also doesn't provide the full two-thirds funding but increases state aid by \$234 million. Reimbursement for 4-year-old kindergarten students would be reduced from .5 and .6 (for half-day and full-day) in the funding formula to .25 (both half- and full-day). The money — approximately \$46 million — would become general school aid. Districts' ability to raise money through property taxes would be limited to a 2.6 percent tax-levy increase over the two years. Revenue cap growth — tied to per-pupil state aid — would be limited.

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"If we don't have money, we might be able to survive one year but have significant layoffs for the second year."

Already belt-tightening

Administrators have been waiting for word on how the state's financial crisis will affect their districts.

Many have held off on new programs and left new positions or retirees' positions open. Others are discussing increased fees and considering dipping into reserve funds.

Although no teacher layoff notices have been issued or existing programs ended because of state-funding cuts at this point, those types of cuts may come next year.

"My own view is that eventually all of us are going to be in that kind of situation," Nerad said.

He said Green Bay's evaluation of the Joint Finance budget seems to show the impact is worse in the second year.

The uncertainty surrounding state school funding is enough that Wrightstown, which typically is among the first districts in the area to adopt its budget, has pushed its timeline back by several months.

"We can't go to our public with a budget when we don't know what we're going to have or how we're going to have it," Superintendent Carla Buboltz said.

Options available

Steve Baas, press secretary for Assembly Speaker John Gard, R-Peshtigo, highlighted the committee's additional money for general school aid.

"They get more money and more flexibility than under the Doyle plan," he said. "We increased the total amount of money going to schools."

But he noted schools will feel an impact under the property-tax restrictions. The proposal allows a 2.6 percent increase in the tax levy over the two-year period.

Doyle's budget did not freeze or limit property taxes, so under his plan districts could have used increased property taxes to make up for lower-than-expected state aid.

Also at issue are revenue caps, which limit the total amount of money a district can take in. Those caps are based in part on enrollment and a per-pupil allotment of state money.

Under the Joint Finance plan, the per-pupil funding would go up \$120 for 2003-04 and \$100 for 2004-05. Based on past annual cost-of-living increases, districts had anticipated an additional \$236 and \$243 per student for those years, Nerad said.

"Is this really, in fact, an increase in school funding?" he asked.

When he looks at district costs that will automatically go up in the next two years, he doesn't think so.

The percentage increase of those costs "doesn't match the kind of percent increase that's being proposed in this Joint Finance proposal," Nerad said.

District plans

Bottom line: Under Doyle's plan, homeowners could see property taxes go up if local governments use those taxes to make up for state losses. Under the committee's plan, those kinds of tax increases would be restricted.

Because districts could make up state losses locally under Doyle's plan, the committee's budget would result in \$465 million less than Doyle's in state aid and property taxes for schools over the next two years, according to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

— Source: The Associated Press and Press-Gazette

Green Bay's one-year strategy is to use any leftover money from this year, make spending reductions where possible, leave some positions unfilled and, if necessary, dip into funds designated for working capital.

That last category is a fund balance that helps the district maintain its bond rating and prevent short-term borrowing because of cash-flow problems.

Nerad said auditors recommend a district maintain 20 to 25 percent of its annual budget in a fund balance. Green Bay's balance is \$28 million — roughly 16.6 percent and dropping as a percentage each year as the budget increases but no new money is added to the fund.

Using that money to avoid cuts "cannot be looked at as anything but a short-term kind of solution," he said.

Pulaski also sees the fund balance as one way to avoid program cuts or layoffs, Superintendent Roy Green said.

"Our priority is to protect services to students and the comprehensiveness of our curriculum," he said. "And because we're a service-intensive institution, that means we have to keep as many service-renderers available as possible. That means not laying off people."

But Wrightstown can't depend on the fund-balance strategy, even as a short-term solution, because it's already dipped into that fund for several years.

"We've used our fund balance to fund programs, to fund teachers, to keep our class sizes small," Buboltz said. "But because we've had to do that for the past three years, it is at a position where we can't do that anymore."

Districts are also looking for any places to make cuts in current spending. Denmark is creating what Meles calls a "survival budget" — identifying bare minimums that must be in place for the district to survive.

Ashwaubenon Superintendent Sue Alberti said her district's proposed budget includes eliminating the equivalent of about seven teaching positions by reductions, eliminating jobs and not replacing some positions.

Facing \$100,000 in cuts to state technology funds, Ashwaubenon also plans to reduce \$200,000 from its technology budget. Alberti said that means not replacing some computers in school labs that were due for an upgrade.

She said the district is also examining the possibility of new student fees for textbooks, activities or parking.

"That's not a done deal, and there's disagreement as to whether or not we actually should be adding another burden onto the families," Alberti said.

West De Pere School District has laid out several possibilities, depending on the severity of the reductions, business manager Kevin Hanson said

Ideas range from not adding new positions to leaving retiree positions open and using some of the \$2 million fund balance.

But if property taxes are frozen on top of some other reduction — and the finance committee's plan verges on that effect — Hanson doesn't know what will happen.

"That's worse than our worst-case scenario," he said. "I don't think anybody anticipated that. ... It's going to create a disaster."

Less impact

Howard-Suamico and De Pere seem to have the best outlooks in the county.

Sue Buchholz, De Pere's director of business services, said projected growth will continue to give the district a financial edge. Still, De Pere would have to deal with a \$365,000 reduction under the Joint Finance proposal as compared to Doyle's proposal, she said.

School board members voted last week to not proceed with a planned world language program.

"They very grudgingly put it on the back burner until we know" the state situation, Buchholz said.

The district also is holding off on hiring new kindergarten teachers it believes will be needed in the fall.

But for now the impact doesn't look as if it will go deeper than that.

In Howard-Suamico, administrators have identified possible reductions based on the final state plan, said John Keller, assistant superintendent for business services.

But he said the district will be able to meet its needs under any circumstances.

Keller said Howard-Suamico has continually built up its fund balance, which stands at a little more than \$2 million.

Cutting programs

Administrators plan to take the situation to their communities if program cuts become necessary. They hope student learning can be at the forefront of any discussions.

"If we have to, I think every school district in the state of Wisconsin will move all the kids into a gymnasium and have one quality teacher teach them. ... That would save a lot of money," Hanson said.

"There are ways to save money. But are they good for kids?"

While they try to figure out how the committee's budget would impact their operations, administrators also are hoping the outlook might change for the better.

"This still isn't over with," Nerad said.

"There are a couple of other key steps" in the budget process.

Meanwhile, they're preparing for most any eventuality.

"We're running worst-case, best-case scenarios," Buchholz said. "And we figure it's going to be somewhere in between."

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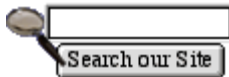


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LOCAL NEWS

Posted June 17, 2003

De Pere teachers to get 2.2% raise in 2003-04

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — Teachers in the De Pere School District will get base pay raises for the first time in three years this fall.

The De Pere School Board on Monday ratified a new two-year contract for 233 teachers calling for a 2.2 percent wage increase across the board for 2003-04 and a conditional 1.33 percent raise for 2004-05.

Teachers were not willing to take a wage freeze this time around after accepting flat wages for the past two years while the district grappled with rising health-insurance costs, said Mike Kaczmarzinski, lead negotiator for the teachers.

"There was a little grumbling, but not to the extent there would have been if we would have had a flat salary schedule again," Kaczmarzinski said of teachers who ratified the plan earlier this month. "It's a very fair contract, and people were very, very happy overall."

The overall wage and benefit package increases 9.38 percent over two years. That compares to 8 percent over the previous two years, said Sue Buchholz, the schools' director of business services.

In recent years, the district has insisted that wage increases are limited in relation to spiraling health-care costs. The second-year raise in this contract could be reduced if anticipated health-care costs grow faster than expected, Buchholz said.

The raises were possible because the district used a competitive bid process for health insurance for the first time and projected cost increases dropped from more than 20 percent to less than 10 percent annually, Buchholz explained.

The district pulled out of a bargaining consortium of Northeast Wisconsin schools this year and went with the bigger Wisconsin Education Association group. As a result, prospective rate increases are expected to drop from 25 percent last year to 9 percent for the coming year, Buchholz said.

With skyrocketing health insurance cost estimates in 2001, the district and teachers agreed to forgo wage hikes in favor of retaining the same quality of insurance coverage. An aggressive effort to keep premiums in line has preserved small employee contributions, low deductibles and minor co-pays.

Single coverage is 100 percent paid by the district, while employees pay 5 percent of the approximate \$800 per month family coverage. Deductibles remain at \$100 for individuals and \$200 for families. Co-pays are limited to prescription drugs and emergency room treatment, Kaczmarzinski said.

Buchholz said districts will continue to be critical shoppers for health insurance as the government budget crisis lingers.

"We wanted to make sure we had control over our own health insurance," Kaczmarzinski said. "The district and union said we'd rather control our own fate."

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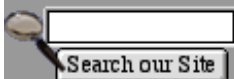
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LOCAL NEWS

Posted July 08, 2003

De Pere School District eyes private funding for athletic fields

By Jim Kneiszel

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DE PERE — With the state budget crisis and education funding in question, it's not the best time to ask taxpayers to foot a potential \$3.5 million bill to fix school athletic fields.

So De Pere School District officials will be asking business leaders and other interested residents to find ways to offset taxpayer cost to replace several athletic fields and add bathrooms to district venues.

"If it's going to be successful, some of it has to be private dollars," said Superintendent Ben Villarruel. "This has to be the community's plan."

Villarruel and proponents of a major soil remediation and a minor construction program envisioned by an outdoor facilities committee will meet with residents Thursday. Villarruel brought the School Board up to date on the recommendations Monday.

Villarruel hopes the informational meeting leads to a program similar to Jaguar Pride, an Ashwaubenon drive that raised \$800,000 for athletic and other school upgrades last year.

"The idea is to start small, gain momentum and build," said Villarruel, who guessed it might take two or three months for a capital campaign to emerge. "This is just the starting point."

The district has been working with architectural firm Bray & Associates of Stevens Point on a plan to smooth out bumpy athletic fields and improve drainage in the heavy clay soil near the high school.

The fields in question are between the high school and Dickinson Elementary School and the high school and middle school. In addition, the plan suggests permanent restrooms, concessions stands and other improvements near the football and baseball complexes, Villarruel explained.

"Even the plan itself we would need to take a closer look at. Do we need everything there?" he said.

A handful of business leaders are invited to the meeting to brainstorm ideas to raise money for the projects, according to Tom Janssen, a member of the outdoor facilities committee.

"It would be great if it could be done privately," Janssen said. "Now it's to the point where a lot of funds are needed. We're just going to meet and figure out what's the best way to go to raise those funds."

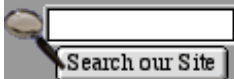
If you want to help

Residents who want to help improve De Pere School District athletic fields and facilities are welcome to attend an informational meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the school district offices at the west entrance of De Pere High School.

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LOCAL NEWS

Posted July 22, 2003

De Pere School District mulls corporate sponsorships

Logos possible on scoreboard

By Jim Kneiszel

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DE PERE — A policy being considered by the De Pere School Board could pave the way for corporate sponsorship of the field house scoreboard or other equipment or facilities.

The district, which currently doesn't allow advertising on its scoreboards or facilities, would allow limited usage of corporate logos when it generates revenue and doesn't compromise educational values, according to the policy.

The policy was read for the first time at the School Board meeting Monday and must be read again next month before it's approved. Administrators recommended corporate recognition should be considered to raise money in certain circumstances.

The use of corporate advertising in schools has waxed and waned over the years as districts grapple with bringing commercialization into the schools, said Ben Villarruel, De Pere Schools superintendent.

"We've had some requests from various groups saying we could generate additional revenue to offset our expenses," Villarruel said.

The new policy restricts the use of corporate logos in several ways, including:

- Sponsor recognition and corporate logos do not relate to a product or service that would be considered educationally controversial or objectionable to a significant number of parents or other members of the district's community.
- Exclusive rights to any product or service are prohibited.
- Logo display for donated equipment is limited to five years.
- Recognition consists of no more than the name of the product or service and the name of the sponsoring organization.

Opening the door to corporate sponsorship comes as the district continues to search for creative ways to pay for proposed improvements to athletic fields and district sports venues.

The district has a wish list of improvements created with the help of an architectural firm, including smoothing out bumpy athletic fields and adding bathrooms and concessions stands at the baseball and football complexes. A volunteer outdoor facilities committee held an informational meeting two weeks ago to introduce the \$3.5 million in improvements to residents who might be interested in a fund-raising campaign.



Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted July 22, 2003

Dickinson to add kindergarten teacher in fall

By Jim Kneiszel

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DE PERE — Enrollment gains are prompting De Pere School District to add an additional kindergarten teacher this fall.

The district had anticipated 203 kindergarteners at Dickinson and Heritage elementary schools, but the number now stands at 219 and could go higher, Superintendent Ben Villarruel said.

The School Board Monday approved hiring an additional teacher at Dickinson, which accounts for about three-fourths of the anticipated enrollment gain, at a cost of between \$40,000 and \$50,000, which includes salary and benefits.

The enrollment numbers are a symptom of continued growth of the district fueled by new home construction. Villarruel said he hopes to meet soon with local officials to determine how quickly a few new subdivisions will fill in. Subdivisions in the city and Ledgeview, which is in the De Pere School District, are expected to include more than 500 homes.

“Interest rates aren’t in any hurry to climb,” Villarruel said, stressing that the district needs to be prepared to handle an influx of students as new houses go up.

The district has advertised for a kindergarten teacher, which will allow class sizes to remain at 20 to 21, Villarruel explained. Without the new teacher, classroom sizes at Dickinson would climb to 24 or 25 students.

- In other news that touches on the issue of enrollment growth, the School Board authorized hiring a consultant to help write an updated strategic plan. Maribeth Achterberg of Verity Management Solutions will be paid up to \$27,000 to work with the board on a new long-range plan.

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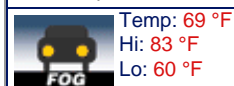
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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Sep. 09, 2003

De Pere school district eyes land for possible school

By Jim Kneiszel

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DE PERE — As a potential precursor to a school referendum, the De Pere School Board later this month will consider forming a citizens committee to study use of land it owns in Ledgeview.

Feeling the effects of suburban sprawl in Ledgeview, Heritage Elementary School went over capacity with the start of the school year, and students from a new subdivision in the town will be diverted to Dickinson Elementary, which is farther away.

Anticipating future development, the school district in 1999 bought a 22-acre parcel along the north side of Brown County G, west of Bower Creek Road. At the time, the land was thought by many to be too far out of the city for a new school, but today hundreds of homes are earmarked for vacant nearby property.

With sewer and water lines laid through the property this summer, school administrators think it's time to take a closer look at it to see if it's the best spot for a new school. The committee's role would not extend into determining the need for a school at this time, Superintendent Ben Villarruel said.

"We want to make sure we can at least put the site question behind us," said Villarruel, who discussed the issue with the board's finance committee on Monday. "If we do need a new facility, is this an acceptable site?"

Enrollment figures suggest the board was on the right track when it bought the property for \$300,000. Heritage enrollment is estimated at 652, just over its capacity, and subdivisions being developed in the newly sewered area could bring several hundred new school-age children to the area. Dickinson, serving the more urban areas of De Pere, is 82 students shy of its capacity.

Community growing quickly

According to census data, Ledgeview is the fastest-growing community in Brown County, with an estimated 2003 population of 4,004, up 19 percent from 2000. The gains don't figure to stop, either, with a 274-lot Mystery Valley subdivision joining others like Ridges at Dollar Creek and Meadow Ridge.

The district was expecting about 95 new students for the 2003-04 school year, but it currently has 147 more students than last year. The district has hired an additional sixth-grade teacher to ease unexpected classroom crowding in that grade, Villarruel said. He said the district will redistribute students among the

De Pere enrollment

Estimated enrollment for third week in September, followed by building capacity:

Heritage Elementary: 652, 650

Dickinson Elementary: 518, 600

Foxview Intermediate: 489, 600

De Pere Middle: 545, 650

De Pere High: 1,032, 1,200

Total: 3,236, 3,700

What's next

- At 6:30 p.m. Sept. 22, the De Pere School Board will address a proposed citizens committee to determine if a 22-acre Ledgeview property it owns remains a good choice for a new school. The board meets at the district offices on the west end of the high school.

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schools before asking taxpayers for a new school.

County planners in 1999 urged the school district to buy land closer to the De Pere city limits for a new school. They worried that the Bower Creek Road parcel might not get sewer and water service for some time. That's no longer an issue. Residents also were concerned about the safety of transporting kids on County G and the existence of an adjacent gas pipeline, Villarruel said.

Purchase seen as needed

"We could have 600 new homes out here in two years, easily. What happened at Heritage didn't take that long, only a couple of years," said Debra Orr-Grewe, who lives near the Mystery Valley development and the school site. A parent involved in recent school referendums, Orr-Grewe said the district made a wise purchase four years ago based on population trends.

"People moaned and groaned at the time, but in hindsight it looks like a good purchase," she said. "The growth, to me, is coming this way and not south to Rockland yet."

Orr-Grewe said traffic concerns remain for the property as County G has continued to get heavier traffic. She said any new school would have to include a place for parents to drop off and pick up kids away from the main roads.

The administration has proposed a citizens committee including four parents, two other district residents, an official from De Pere and Ledgeview, a School Board member and district administrators. It would be asked to report to the board early next year.

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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Sep. 17, 2003

De Pere parents rip sex education program

Some want more detailed look at what curriculum will offer

By Jim Kneiszel

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DE PERE — A small group of parents on Tuesday criticized the updated De Pere Schools sex education curriculum, a few saying it goes too far and others saying it doesn't go far enough in explaining the facts of life.

"I feel the schools are doing more parenting than they should," said Debra Orr-Grewe, who said she's kept her children from attending the sex ed curriculum in earlier grades. Orr-Grewe said boys and girls should be separated during the classes in younger grades and that the option to withhold children from the classes should be spelled out clearly.

"We need to be more aggressive in school because parents aren't doing what they should be doing at home," countered Valerie Corrigan, a parent and a counselor at the Family Services Sexual Assault Center in Green Bay. "The number of kids being sexually assaulted is incredible and it's because parents are not teaching the kids what's right and wrong."

About a dozen people turned out at the first of two public hearings on the human growth and development curriculum that is being revised for the first time in six years. No significant changes were made to the policy during a recent review, according to Bonnie Emrick, director of curriculum and instruction for the district.

The curriculum outlines sex education instruction from grade 4 through 12 and was written based on review of state guidelines, parent input through a parent survey and study by a curriculum committee. The full guidelines may be viewed online at www.de.pere.k12.wi.us (Click on human growth and development heading for a menu of information).

Throughout the curriculum, the school will not condone sexual intercourse between teens outside of marriage or take a moral position on pregnancy prevention and contraception. Further, the curriculum will not demonstrate use of contraceptives or take a moral position on homosexuality.

"We feel it's an accurate mirror of what our community wants," said Emrick, who added that the board could make changes to the policy based on the public hearings. The second hearing will be Sept. 25 at 6:30 p.m. at the Heritage School cafeteria.

A handful of parents said they would like to see a day-by-day outline of what will be taught so they can choose when to keep their children from attending health class. They said they would like to know the moral position of the instructors to determine how they will react to delicate questions.

"This program makes my life easier and keeps the lines of communication open," Kate Janssen said in support of the program and asking for a more aggressive approach. Janssen expressed mystification over parents keeping their children out of the classes. She used a friend who doesn't believe in the theory of evolution as an example.

"I don't see her pulling her kids out of science class," Janssen said. "I feel the same way with health and sexuality. We'll deal with it."

Corrigan said she would support starting the sex education program at earlier grades and stressing it more strongly.

"Taking your kids out of health classes is not the answer," she said. "The more you talk to kids and repeat things to them, the more they are going to get it."

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Oct. 29, 2003

De Pere School District site pipeline raises safety issue

Same line runs through Danz, Preble High

By Jim Kneiszel

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An underground gasoline pipeline running through a 22-acre property owned by the De Pere School District is one of four issues identified by a committee studying the viability of the site for an elementary school.

The pipeline carries 2.5 million gallons of fuel daily through the center of the property — located along the north side of Brown County G and west of Bower Creek Road in Ledgeview — on the way to storage facilities on the west side of Green Bay.

While the pipeline doesn't raise serious safety concerns for site study committee member Richard Huxford, he said a perception of danger among parents might be enough to thwart future school construction.

"Unfortunately, whether it's real or perceived, the perception sometimes becomes real," said Huxford, who attended the committee's first meeting last week. "Would something happen? Probably not. However, the perception is that it is possible. So do we want to chance it?"

Ben Villarruel, superintendent of De Pere Schools, said the pipeline shouldn't prove to be a big issue, pointing out that the same line runs through the properties of Danz Elementary School and Preble High School in Green Bay.

"We'll just have to work through the process," he said. "I believe it's an issue of perception, and maybe we won't be able to overcome that."

The committee of about 18 district residents, business leaders and school officials was formed recently to take another look at the Ledgeview property.

The district bought the land for \$300,000 in 1999 in anticipation of development. Since then, several subdivisions have sprung up in the area, and schools are beginning to feel the impact of residential growth.

The committee is supposed to recommend whether the site remains viable for a new school. The group will report to the School Board early in 2004. The study group could be the first indicator of a potential referendum for a third elementary school in the district.

What's next

The citizens committee studying the De Pere School District's Ledgeview property will hold its second meeting at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 5 at the district offices on the west side of De Pere High School.

About the pipeline

The 10-inch steel pipeline was buried on the site in 1961 and averages a depth of 3 feet along the Chicago-Green Bay corridor.

A variety of petroleum liquids are piped through the line, including most of the gasoline consumed in this part of the state, said Scott Croston, business development manager for West Shore Pipeline. The line moves 2.5 million gallons per day into Green Bay, and the oil products take three to four days to get from Chicago to Green Bay.

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The committee has already identified traffic on County G as a major issue to overcome if the site is used for a school. The group will also consider whether the next school should be built in a more densely populated area and whether the site in question — now sewered — is too valuable to use for a school.

Huxford said he heard complaints about the gas line when district residents chose through a referendum to redevelop the vacant former high school downtown rather than build on the site a few years ago.

“What I heard was that there’s a gas line through this parcel, and a lot of people said there’s no way they would vote to permit a school to be built,” he said. “If you can’t put the plan together with a guarantee of safety for taxpayers, how do you placate them?”

Cole Runge, a committee member who’s both a district parent and principal planner for Brown County, said he isn’t concerned about the pipeline. He said the district would simply follow regulations that require a 50-foot undeveloped easement ensuring access to the pipeline when needed.

“There’s pipelines like that all over the place,” he said. “I haven’t heard stories about how they are unearthed or burst.”

Questions about safety come up occasionally when construction is planned near a pipeline, according to Scott Croston, business development manager for West Shore Pipeline, which manages the line for seven oil companies which own it together.

Croston, who works out of a Chicago office, has offered to meet with the committee to answer questions about the line, which runs from Chicago to Milwaukee, then to Green Bay.

Croston didn’t have any specific information on repair or safety records regarding the line going through the school site. But the Association of Oil Pipe Lines reports on its Web site that pipelines are the safest mode of transport for petroleum products.

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School Board questions policy allowing students to skip finals

Attendance may no longer be a factor in skipping exams

By Patti Zarling

De Pere school officials may end — or surely will modify — a decades-old policy that allows De Pere High School students to skip final exams as a reward for good attendance.

Under the district's current policy, high school students with excellent attendance records and decent grades are allowed to choose whether to take end-of-semester tests.

Those who support the policy say it encourages students to stay in school. They say many students opt to take tests anyway to boost grades.

People who oppose the plan say it encourages very ill students to come to school. It also might make it difficult for students to take standardized tests in college, and is unfair to teachers who might think a final review is necessary for the subject matter taught.

De Pere High School principal Matt Weller said the policy,

begun in the early 1980s, came at a time when school attendance was poor and students didn't have a strong desire to be involved.

At that time, it was thought very few students would qualify, he said. Under the policy, a student with an "A" average is allowed four absences, a student with a "B" average three absences and a student with a "C" or "D" average can miss just two days of school.

These days about two-thirds of the student population is eligible for the reward, Weller said. But of those, about 75 percent say they still come in to take at least some of the tests, he said.

Weller said that while he supports the premise of the policy, it might be time for some tweaking.

He said parents are most worried about whether skipping exams will hurt students once they enter college and must take tests.

"I have never had a student come back and say anything," Weller said. "I have not found this to be a significant issue."

Teachers, he said, are worried about consistency.

"That can be a problem," said School Board member Suse Riddle, who thinks the policy needs a major overhaul. "If you have teachers A and B teaching the same class and one requires an exam and the other doesn't, that's a problem."

Weller said students have concerns about the strictness of the attendance requirement. They'd like to see it opened up for those who are very ill, or for those who must miss school because of medical appointments or even family vacations. Under current policy, only a death in the family or a hospital

stay is exempt.

Weller said many school districts adopted similar policies in the 1980s.

“It works,” he said. “It does raise attendance. It does raise achievement levels. It does create some headaches and heartaches, but I think we’ve become so accustomed to it, it’s hard for us to think back to a time before it was in place.”

School Board vice president Randall Kruk supports the policy, although he said a review is in order.

As a parent with three children who went through the district, he said he has no real concerns about the current policy.

“My kids all went through the schools, and they are none worse for the wear,” he said. “Two went on to grad school and one is finishing up undergrad studies.

“I think the policy did motivate them, but I also know in many cases they opted to take tests anyway,” he said.

Board president Fred Fullerton said that although he backs Weller and other administrators, he thinks the policy needs some fine tuning.

“Personally, I have a difference of opinion about rewarding a student with a day off when we’re trying to get them to attend school,” he said. “We’re not just exempting them from taking a test, we’re exempting them from attending school.

“I’m also concerned there’s very sick children coming to school. If there’s a child who’s legitimately sick, they shouldn’t be in school.”

He said teachers should have the final say on whether a final exam is given. Some may prefer a paper or final project, he said.

Riddle said teachers should be able to excuse students from exams based on academic performance throughout the semester, but not for attendance.

“This policy is quite unique among our area high schools,” she said. “Policies like it have been deemed antiquated due to state mandates for achievement testing and have been systematically abandoned, including West De Pere in the mid-90s.

“My hope is that the motivation for coming to school comes from more academically valuable sources than being exempted from a test, which in and of itself is a valuable learning tool.”

Weller said he will discuss options for changing the policy with staff and will bring recommendations back to the board on Dec. 17. Some board members say they would like to see a new policy in place for the 2004-2005 school year.

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Jan. 13, 2004

De Pere School Board mulls building options

Housing boom expected to crimp elementary, high schools

By Jim Kneiszel

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DE PERE — Facing the prospect of more than 1,000 new home lots within its boundaries, the De Pere School District is searching for real estate of its own.

Anticipating enrollment spikes, particularly at the elementary and high school levels, the school board has authorized administrators to start looking for a second vacant school site.

Administrators estimate the district could grow by 1,000 students in coming years, based on subdivision developments that have either been approved or are awaiting approval. And even without additional new homes, Heritage Elementary is at capacity now, and bulging enrollment at the middle school level could bring the high school to capacity in three years.

In the midst of a real estate boom driven by continued low interest rates, a piece of land up to 30 acres will come at a high cost. According to a local developer, land for a potential school site could fetch up to \$30,000 per acre, or closing in on \$1 million for a little more than 30 acres.

"What we see on the horizon is a lot of housing development in our school district," said Ben Villarruel, the school superintendent. "And that leads to the question: Is one site adequate to meet all our needs?"

The district purchased a 22-acre parcel in Ledgeview on Brown County G west of Bower Creek Road in 1999 for \$300,000. A board subcommittee is studying whether the Bower Creek site remains a viable location for an elementary school.

Growth areas

In this month's district newsletter, Villarruel outlined developments that would contribute to an eventual crowding problem. The growth in De Pere, Ledgeview and Bellevue totals 1,013 new lots, including 518 single-family and 42 duplex lots, 28 condominiums, 48 multifamily and 377 unspecified dwellings.

The approved subdivisions include Mystery Valley, Pheasant Run, Meadow Ridge/Ridges of Dollar Creek, Country Winds, Diamond Run Estates and Spring Hill in Ledgeview; Bower Creek Estates North and South and Sunshine Fields in Bellevue and Trailside Estates in De Pere.

Most of the expected growth will take place in the southwest corner of Bellevue and northeast corner of Ledgeview. The De Pere subdivision will be built on acreage the city annexed from Rockland last year.

Time to buy

Bower Creek meeting

The Bower Creek Property Advisory Committee meets at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the De Pere School District offices at the west end of De Pere High School. The committee will make a recommendation to the School Board Jan. 19 about what the school district should do with the 22-acre parcel.

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The purchase of the Bower Creek property seems to have been a fortuitous move on the district's part, given the approval last year of the nearby Mystery Valley project that will include about 250 single-family homes. Villarruel said the district would like to think ahead again and bank the land for the future. He said property in all areas of the district will be considered and administrators will report back to the board after scanning the market.

"The dilemma always is to purchase property when it's affordable and yet have it close enough to the development when it's time to add a school," said Rob Lennon, the district's director of pupil services.

The district probably made a good move buying the Bower Creek property, said Steve Seidl, a local commercial and investment real estate developer. He said desirable larger parcels are selling for about \$30,000 per acre.

"Vacant land in the path of development has been very hot, with multiple developers coming in and bidding prices up," Seidl said. "It's pushed land prices higher faster than I've ever seen them rise."

Prices for undeveloped land have doubled in four or five years, Seidl said, and the district will have to compete with high-volume developers for the land.

Space needs

Current guidelines from the state Department of Public Instruction recommend 10 acres for a new elementary school, 20 acres for a middle school and 30 acres for a high school, plus an additional acre for every 100 students, Lennon said. Given enrollment patterns, the district will see crowding first at the elementary level, then at the high school, Lennon said.

With larger classes poised to enter the high school, the recently remodeled school could grow beyond its capacity in three years, Lennon said. Next year, about 60 more students will be entering ninth grade than the number in the graduating class. That pattern is expected to continue, he said. High school enrollment is 1,027 and capacity is 1,200. At the same time, Heritage is near its 650-student capacity and Dickinson Elementary isn't far behind.

The new subdivisions will be dominated by what Lennon termed "starter homes," and those homes usually bring more school-age children than the average home. The typical Brown County new home brings 0.5 school children, and Lennon expects developments like Mystery Valley to contribute about one student per household.

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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Mar. 03, 2004

De Pere School District to hire more teachers

Schools to see enrollment boom next year

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — Expecting 112 new students for the coming school year, the De Pere School Board will be spending more than a half million dollars to hire nearly a dozen new teachers.

The staffing request came at a special meeting Monday when the board learned the freshman class at the high school in 2004-'05 will top the 300 mark for the first time and the high school is expected to reach capacity during the 2005-'06 school year.

Enrollment gains figure to threaten the number of students the district will accept from outside the district through open enrollment. The board decided to reject applications from students in grades 5-11 who want to start attending De Pere schools.

"There aren't many districts growing like De Pere," said Superintendent Ben Villarruel, explaining the open-enrollment decision. With a decade of annual triple-digit enrollment gains, the district is expected to have 3,342 students in the fall.

The enrollment bulge is happening at the high school, which is expected to have 1,095 students this fall, fast approaching its capacity of 1,200 students, Villarruel said.

Half of the 10.7 full-time equivalent positions to be filled by the fall are for high school teachers, he said.

The incoming class is expected to be 305 students and each class entering the school during the next five years is expected to top 300 students.

The board has until April 9 to answer 51 open enrollment requests.

Students in grades 5-11 will be rejected because they would contribute to the crowding at the high school, Villarruel said.

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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Apr. 04, 2004

De Pere Unified School Board

Three winners will serve three-year terms with annual salaries of \$2,250. Candidates submitted biographical and issue information. The (I) indicates incumbent candidates.

David Kyto

Address: Fox River Drive, De Pere**Years in district:** 10**Age:** 40**Occupation:** Director, Rate Case Process, Wisconsin Public Service Corp.**Family:** Wife, Lori; and two school-age children

Education: Bachelors degree in mechanical engineering, U.S. Naval Academy; masters degree in nuclear engineering, University of Michigan; graduate of Naval Nuclear Power Training Course; licensed professional engineer; masters of business administration, UW-Oshkosh

Political experience: None

Community involvement: Graduate of Leadership Green Bay program, 2001; Rapides De Pere youth soccer coach, 2001; De Pere Unified Schools Strategic Planning Committee, 2003; Member of Old St. Joseph Church at St. Norbert College.

Top issue: In my opinion, the tremendous growth in the student population is the biggest issue facing the East De Pere School District. Based on this growth, it is likely that construction or expansion of school facilities will be necessary in the near future. I would like to be part of the decision-making process regarding this construction/expansion, balancing the interests of both the students and the local community.

Michael LeMay

Address: North Erie St., De Pere**Years in district:** Four**Age:** 50**Occupation:** General manager of a Christian radio station**Family:** Wife, Nancy; and two children

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Education: High school graduate plus two years at UWGB

Political experience: None

Community involvement: Boards of directors for Wisconsin Right To Life, Urban Hope, and Young Community; currently president of the Green Bay chapter of Christians In Commerce; co-leader of the "Marriages God Blesses" classes and a monthly children's church leader at First Christian Church of Green Bay; advisory council for developing the Christian Stewardship Foundation of Northeastern Wisconsin.

Top issue: Our youth need to be better prepared for college and life as adults. More money is not the solution. Accountability is! I would work toward more accountability of students, teachers, administrators and parents. Also, we must stop trying to throw God out of our schools. Youth of all religious beliefs need to be welcome in our schools, but we must remember that our country and school system were founded on Judeo-Christian values.

Sandy Mentzel

Address: West Baraboo Circle, De Pere

Years in district: 10

Age: 41

Occupation: Raising 2 daughters/homemaker

Family: Husband, Mike; daughters, Ally, seventh-grader at the Middle school; Rachel, fourth-grader at Dickinson Elementary

Education: Bachelor of arts, economics; minor in finance from Douglass College, Rutgers University; Passed the Series 7 Stockbrokers exam, seven years securities/accounting experience

Political experience: none

Community involvement: President, De Pere Middle School PTO; active parent volunteer at Dickinson Elementary/Foxview Intermediate, wrote Dickinson PTO articles for the De Pere Hi-Lights, Girl Scout leader for 2 years, active member at Spring Lake Church, Moms in Touch Leader, Make-A-Difference Day volunteer

Top issue: Student achievement and promoting a love of learning is a top priority. The continued review of the curriculum will assist this goal. A coordinated character education plan should be developed.

We have wonderful teachers and staff but the ultimate responsibility of educating children rests with parents, so I would promote an increase in communication between the schools and parents.

Elizabeth (Libby) Ogard

Address: Fox River Drive, De Pere

Years in district: Eight

Age: 48

Occupation: Senior associate, Tioga Group – freight transportation and policy

Family: Husband, John; and two school-age children

Education: Master's degree, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul; bachelor degree, Michigan State University.

Political experience: Ashwaubenon Planning Commission, 1993-95; City Council commissioner in

Hayward, Calif., chairman of Community Development Block Grant Committee, 1988-1993.

Community involvement: 2002 CESA 7 Volunteer on National Science Foundation Grant Committee; 2002 wrote grants for eighth-grade weather station and middle school musical instruments; 2002 participant in the superintendent selection committee for De Pere Unified Schools; 1998 Participant in the Curriculum for the 21st Century committee, De Pere Unified Schools; 2002 De Pere Middle School PTA – author, seventh-grade science equipment grant; 1999 Heritage Elementary PTA, Program chairman for school wide Sciencefest; 1999 Dickinson Elementary — author, musician in residence grant performed with Randy Peterson, presented at the Weidner Center; 1999-2000 president of De Pere Youth Hockey; 2000 – board member De Pere Select Soccer; 1992 Council of Logistics Management, Professional Education, Track Chairperson “Transportation”; 1999 Professional Education, Track Chairperson “Global Logistics”; 2000 Professional Education, Track Chairperson “E Commerce Business to Consumer” Transportation Research Board-Member Transportation and Logistics Committee; Intermodal Association of North American – Past Board Member; Northeast Wisconsin Rose Society

Top issue: Curriculum: The district is in the process of evaluating and updating the math and science curriculum. Coordination is needed to minimize duplication of teaching units and to ensure that we are preparing our students with the new skills that are needed in the global economy. More work is needed for programs aimed at the gifted and talented students and for students who will enter the work force directly from High School. The new curriculum needs to reflect current technologies and business practices, delivered in a method that engages students to participate.

Suse Riddle (I)

Address: Charles Street, De Pere

Years in district: 18

Occupation: Teacher, loan officer for Affiliated Mortgage and Financial Corp.

Family: Married, children, 16 and 18 in De Pere schools

Education: B.S., mathematics, master’s and additional education studies

Political experience: Completing first term on USDD Board

Community involvement: Coordinator, youth baseball, De Pere; Happy Valley 4-H volunteer, Ascension Lutheran Church, music ministry

Top issue: The top financial issue is the impact of our district’s growth. I am pleased with the approach we have been taking toward accommodating the additional students area development will bring to our district. We must, however, carefully assess our existing facilities, resources and programs so that our planning is more far-sighted than than of the last building project, and that we can accomplish necessary goals while minimizing the burden on the taxpayer.

The top organizational issue is accountability and performance assessment of all personnel. We need to make sure our teachers, administration and non-certified staff are equipped with the tools and strategies to ensure that our schools are meeting community expectations. We need to continue to ask the hard questions with regard to programs, policy and staffing so that we are providing the highest quality experience for all students while minimizing cost and providing the educational experience our community expects. This requires that we promote vigorous communications between parents, taxpayers and school planners and an active program promoting annual professional review and renewal.

Bill Van Beek (I)

Address: St. Francis Road, De Pere

Years in district: Seven

Age: 46

Occupation: General manager, Schneider Logistics

Family: Wife Mary and one stepdaughter

Education: Bachelors, Masters and Masters of Business Administration degrees from Purdue University

Political experience: De Pere Unified Schools, treasurer, 3 years

Community involvement: Faith Lutheran Church; De Pere Unified Schools Strategic Planning Committee, 2003; Bower Creek Committee, 2003-04

Top issue: Growth: De Pere is still in a very enviable situation with the continuing growth in student population. This issue will necessitate decisions to be made in the near future that deal with new facilities and the infrastructure needed to support them. I would look to expand upon the work that the Board has initiated over the last 3 years and seek to develop the best solutions to deal with the impending growth.

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Oct. 20, 2004

De Pere teachers reach contract agreement

Final negotiations continue

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — Teachers and the De Pere School Board this week ratified the financials for a two-year contract — with a total package increase of 9.38 percent — for 270 members of the De Pere Education Association.

Negotiations were amicable and led to De Pere being one of the first districts in the state to nail down wage and fringe benefits numbers for the 2005-07 school years, said union representative Glenn Lehnert.

While the sides hammered out the most contentious details early, they will continue to work on contract language and are expected to finish the agreement by next summer, said Ben Villarruel, the De Pere superintendent.

"We do not have an antagonistic relationship with our current board. We have an exceptionally good relationship," Lehnert said.

Though some uncertainty remains based on rising health-care costs, the teachers are slated to receive a 3.15 percent salary increase for 2005-06 and a 2.27 percent increase for 2006-07. In another change that swayed union support, the early retirement eligibility age will be reduced from 57 to 55 years old.

"That's a big reason teachers were in favor of this package," Lehnert said. Along with the earlier age eligibility, the district will contribute another \$10,000 to help cover health insurance benefits for those two years, Lehnert said. Lehnert said he wasn't sure how many teachers would be able to afford to take advantage of the early retirement benefit without taking another job.

The total package for teachers mirrors the previous two-year contract, Villarruel said. The previous contract, however, offered slightly lower salary increases while the district tried to rein in spiraling health-care costs by joining a larger insurance bargaining consortium.

Teachers could end up losing some of the salary increases if health-care costs rise by double digits. A stipulation in the contract states that if health-care costs rise more than 12 percent, the salary base will be decreased to make up the difference.

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Oct. 21, 2004

Halting of municipal-bond borrowing keeps De Pere school district from restructuring debt

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — A proposal by the De Pere Unified School District to restructure \$18.6 million in debt was derailed last week when the U.S. Treasury Department temporarily halted a type of municipal-bond borrowing.

The district school board was set to act on refinancing Monday that would have saved district taxpayers \$1.4 million through lower interest rates made possible by favorable borrowing conditions. The debt is related to building projects connected to a 2000 referendum.

The Treasury Department blocked State and Local Government Series securities to municipal issuers to avoid going over a \$7.4 trillion debt limit. The restriction could be lifted as soon as mid-November, allowing the district to complete the restructuring, according to Jeff Belongia, the district's financial consultant.

Borrowing rates are near a 45-year low and the delay could mean the district will have to pay slightly higher interest rates, Belongia said. The district had sold bonds at a 3.7 percent interest rate to replace money borrowed at 5 percent. The district had to cancel those bond sales late last week when the borrowing limits kicked in. Congress can expand the debt ceiling and may do so after the November elections, Belongia said.

"The markets were favorable for us to do some refinancing," said Ben Villarruel, the De Pere superintendent. "We're deeply disappointed at the suddenness of the decision by the Treasury Department."

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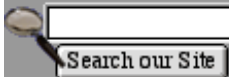


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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Oct. 26, 2004

De Pere schools hold line on tax rate with an eye toward crowding

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — School taxes will remain steady for the third successive year in the De Pere School District despite a growing 2004-05 tax levy.

The tax levy will rise by just more than \$1 million and the general fund budget is up 7 percent to about \$27 million, according to the budget, which received final approval Monday.

A building boom east of the Fox River is bringing in more tax money and allowing the district to hold the line on taxes despite growing enrollment. Property value in the district is up 8 percent, balancing a tax levy increase a shade under 8 percent.

The district outstripped expectations for new students this school year and continues to add a few students every week as people move into new homes in the district, according to Superintendent Ben Villarruel. The district reports 152 more students for the new school year, 40 above its earlier projections.

Following Monday's brief School Board meeting, administrators met with parents from elementary, intermediate and middle schools to look for a short term solution to a growing problem with crowding. The district expects elementary enrollment to top 1,300 by next year, eclipsing the capacity at Heritage and Dickinson elementary schools by 50 students.

"While we have some breathing room, we want to develop a short-term plan rather than be reactionary come September," said Ben Villarruel, the school superintendent.

A committee of administrators and two parents from all the schools except the high school will look for ways to balance the enrollment at all schools while the community mulls proposals for a new school. Villarruel has said the most likely building scenario now is to construct a third elementary school in the Ledgerview area.

"None of us want to see our tax bill go up, but if it's going to go up, I'd rather have it go to education than any other program out there," said Suzanne Driscoll, who has four children attending the local schools.

Driscoll represents Heritage Elementary on the committee exploring crowding solutions. Heritage is the newest elementary school in the district, has filled up the fastest and no longer has available classrooms for expansion. Some newer subdivisions have had to have children diverted to Dickinson because of crowding at Heritage.

"There just isn't any space anywhere, but the teachers are making the best of it," Driscoll said.

De Pere schools

2004-05 budget

• **General fund budget:** \$27,061,178, up 7.01 percent from \$25,289,189 last year.

• **Tax levy:** \$13,822,614, up 7.93 percent from \$12,806,171 last year.

• **Equalized tax rate:** \$11.05 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation, identical to the budget for 2003-04. This is not the amount you will see on your tax bill. Tax bills are based on assessed value, which varies by municipality. Total tax bills also include school and municipal taxes.

• **Tax on a \$100,000 home:** \$1,105

The district is considering purchasing property for a new school and has projected that it will need to schedule a building referendum in 2005.

Driscoll said the crowding would eventually reach the high school, which was designed to handle another addition. But she wondered if parents want to see the high school grow by another 200 students.

"Overcrowding is the biggest issue and we have to make people understand that it's not going away," she said. "It's going to get worse before it gets better."

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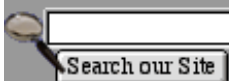


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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Jan. 19, 2005

De Pere schools examine building issues

District seeks volunteers for committee to study enrollment

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — As elementary and high schools approach capacity, both De Pere school districts are looking at enrollment and facility issues.

The De Pere School District is looking for volunteers to serve on a citizen advisory committee that will meet beginning next month and will be asked to recommend an action plan to the school board this spring, according to Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

The district is seeking about 20 volunteers for the committee, including eight parents, four retirees, four business representatives, two at-large community members and two current staff members. All volunteers must be district residents.

The committee will be asked to study current and projected enrollments, future facility usage, population growth and residential development. In May, the committee is expected to make a recommendation to the School Board regarding potential building projects.

The School Board authorized forming the committee at a meeting on Monday and will assemble the committee as soon as possible, Villarruel said. Anyone interested in serving should call Janine Rasmussen at the district offices, (920) 337-1032.

The committee comes as substantial residential development pushes enrollments toward capacity, specifically at Heritage and Dickinson elementary schools and at the high school. The grade K-4 schools have 1,231 students, 19 shy of the combined capacity of 1,250. Villarruel said they might reach capacity by the end of the school year.

At the high school, enrollment is 1,100 students and is expected to grow to 1,208 for the 2005-06 school year. Capacity is 1,200.

In the West De Pere School District, residential development continues at a similarly brisk pace.

Both districts have said they may seek a building referendum for elementary schools as early as this fall to ease expected crowding.

Lanny Tibaldo, the West De Pere superintendent, said the School Board will soon be entering planning sessions to determine needs for the next five to seven years. The West De Pere board has yet to

Fall 2004 enrollments

The first number is the district's 2003 enrollment, followed by 2004 enrollment and percentage change.

Ashwaubenon: 3,123, 3,126, 0.1%

De Pere: 3,230, 3,374, 4.5%

Denmark: 1,620, 1,622, 0.1%

Green Bay: 20,300, 20,305, 0.02%

Pulaski: 3,550, 3,597, 1.3%

West De Pere: 2,010, 2,112, 5.1%

Wrightstown: 1,054, 1,131, 7.3%

Sources: Brown County school districts

organize a citizens committee similar to the De Pere group.

"The West De Pere district will address growth and all other issues that relate to our district and where we're headed in the future with strategic planning that is getting organized now," said Tibaldo.

Both districts have been involved in closed-session negotiations to buy properties for new schools, West De Pere in the area west of U.S. 41 and De Pere in the growing Ledgeview area.

Both districts had planned to have 15 to 20 acres purchased for a new school by the end of 2004, but there hasn't been any news.

"We continue to have good discussions and are trying to be very diligent and deliberate in this whole process," Villarruel said. The district is working with town of Ledgeview officials to identify potential school sites, he said.

The De Pere district already owns a site in Ledgeview at Brown County G and Bower Creek Road. But a study committee last year determined the property is not well suited for a school and it may be sold to defray the cost of a new site.

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Feb. 03, 2005

Resident group to study growth in De Pere schools

Both districts plan to purchase property for future space needs

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — About 40 people will form a resident advisory committee to study enrollment trends and facility needs in the De Pere School District beginning this month.

The group will take a deeper look into a scenario of bulging elementary and high school enrollment and shrinking desk space already outlined by school administrators.

"The need is there. Now, how do you address it?" asks Richard Huxford, a volunteer member of the new committee. "Don't just say: 'Here's the answer and let's go out and sell it.' "

The committee will meet for the first time on Feb. 24, and the plan is to make recommendations on potential action to the School Board in May, said Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

The district has hired former Green Bay Schools Superintendent Tom Joynt as a facilitator for the committee.

Joynt will be paid up to \$3,500 to work with the committee along with a second person, Carolyn Jahns, a program support teacher for the district.

The School Board recently authorized the ad hoc committee to include parents of district students, retirees, local business people and teachers. The group is being asked to look at enrollment projections, facility needs and area population growth and to make recommendations on a potential building project.

The committee comes as substantial residential development pushes enrollments toward capacity, specifically at Heritage and Dickinson elementary schools and at the high school.

If you go

A new resident advisory committee studying enrollment trends and facility needs in the De Pere School District will meet for the first time at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 24 at the district offices, 1700 Chicago St.

Fall 2004 enrollments

School district	Enrollment		Percent
	2003	2004	change
Ashwaubenon	3,123	3,126	0.1%
De Pere	3,230	3,374	4.5%
Denmark	1,620	1,622	0.1%
Green Bay	20,300	20,305	0.02%
Pulaski	3,550	3,597	1.3%
West De Pere	2,010	2,112	5.1%
Wrightstown	1,054	1,131	7.3%

Sources: Brown County school districts

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The grade K-4 schools have 1,231 students, 19 shy of the combined capacity of 1,250. Villarruel said they might reach capacity by the end of the school year.

At the high school, enrollment is 1,100 students and is expected to grow to 1,208 for the 2005-06 school year. Capacity is 1,200.

Both the De Pere and West De Pere districts have been involved in closed-session negotiations to buy properties for new schools.

West De Pere is looking in the area west of U.S. 41 and De Pere in the growing Ledgeview area.

Both districts had planned to have 15 to 20 acres purchased for a school by the end of 2004, but there hasn't been any news.

A resident committee last year recommended the De Pere district sell a site it already owns at Brown County G and Bower Creek Road in Ledgeview.

It determined that the site, which has a gas pipeline running through it, would be unsuitable for an elementary school and should be sold to defray the cost of another school site.

Huxford, who also was on the earlier committee, said he would maintain an open mind about the best solution to the crowding issue.

Though he lives in an area of Ledgeview — near the new Mystery Valley subdivision — that's exploding with new homes, Huxford said a new elementary school in Ledgeview was only one potential answer.

When the last school referendum passed in 2000, teachers promoted a philosophy that smaller elementary schools were better than larger schools, Huxford said.

He wants to examine whether it would be a good idea to expand the existing elementary schools rather than build a new one.

"I lean toward making buildings bigger at this point," he said, noting that additions would be less expensive than new schools.

A School Board member long ago, Huxford said district residents have always been generous about building and expanding schools and have been supportive of education in general.

"It's a very pro-education area," he said. "I've come to believe and see firsthand that cost tends to become a secondary issue almost."

Originally hoping to find 20 people willing to be on the committee, Villarruel was pleased with the large volunteer count.

"People are very supportive of the district and are willing to assist the district in any way they can. It's a very nice sign," he said.

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Green Bay Weather



LOCAL NEWS

Posted Feb. 08, 2005

Ledgeview development plan may include new school

De Pere district interested in site

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

LEDGEVIEW — Plans for a new residential development incorporating a potential school site near Brown County G and GV were submitted to the Ledgeview Town Board Monday.

Two proposals were submitted for Dickinson Heights — with and without a 19-acre school site — on a property that might be used by the De Pere School District for a new elementary school.

Months in the making, the proposal would either put 67 homes and a school or 87 homes — along with two commercial lots — just northeast of what is shaping up as the commercial hub for the fast-growing Brown County community.

The plan is being forwarded by developer Joel Gmack on three parcels currently owned by a local family, according to Sarah Burdette, the Ledgeview Town Clerk.

Burdette has been working with De Pere school officials for a year to locate a new school site near an area of burgeoning residential growth.

Burdette told the Town Board the School District would like to work with the town on a potential shared park adjacent to the school property. Board members expressed an interest in walking trails and more green space for the area.

The district already owns a school site just to the east, at Bower Creek Road and County G, but that site is considered less suitable for a school because a petroleum pipeline runs through it. The De Pere district bought the 22-acre parcel for \$300,000 in 1999. The property has gained significantly in value and could be sold to raise money for another school site.

Last year alone, Ledgeview saw 225 new single-family homes built and several newer subdivisions in the development stages, Burdette said. In the past, school officials have said that for every two new homes in a growing area, another student is added to the enrollment.

"We knew it was going to take off. But it's been very quick and it's very exciting in that respect," Burdette said of the fast growth in Ledgeview. "It's amazing how the landscape has changed in the past three years."

De Pere School Superintendent Ben Villarruel declined to comment on the school site included in the Gmack proposal, but confirmed that the district has been having conversations about a land purchase. Gmack couldn't be reached for comment on Monday and didn't attend the board meeting.

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However, Burdette said she's been working with both sides for some time on the proposal and that the school district has made an offer to purchase land. She said at one time the district had been trying to work out some sort of land swap involving the property it already owns.

The Dickinson Heights proposal will be sent to the zoning and planning committee for a Feb. 17 public hearing. The town board will hold a second public hearing on the proposal Feb. 22.

Last week, the district announced that 40 people will form a citizen advisory committee to study enrollment trends and facility needs in the De Pere School District beginning Feb. 24. The group plans to make recommendations on potential action to the School Board in May.

The committee comes as development pushes enrollments toward capacity, specifically at Heritage and Dickinson elementary schools and at the high school. The grade K-4 schools have 1,231 students, 19 shy of the combined capacity of 1,250. At the high school, enrollment is 1,100 students and is expected to grow to 1,208 for the 2005-06 school year. Capacity is 1,200.

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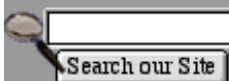
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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Feb. 08, 2005

De Pere concession stand project unveiled

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — Buying a box of popcorn and a halftime visit to the restroom will be more pleasant at De Pere High School football games if the De Pere Rotary Club is successful at raising \$175,000 for a new concession building at the high school.

The club at the De Pere School District on Monday announced a campaign for a new masonry concession stand and matching ticket booth/entrance gate at Braisher Stadium.

The current concession stand — built into the framework of the stadium bleachers in 1984 — is outdated and the stadium has no focal point entrance, according to Jeff Byczak, the school athletics director.

The new 1,700-square-foot concessions building will have space to serve food, concessions storage, an apparel sales area and restrooms. The school currently uses portable restrooms during school sporting events at the Redbird athletic complex.

“Everyone who’s been to one of our games will say putting in new bathrooms is long overdue,” Byczak said. “With increased enrollment, we’ve seen increased attendance at games.”

Byczak estimated that varsity football attendance has jumped from about 1,000 to 1,700 for traditional opponents in recent years, creating more demand for concessions and restrooms. To be located at the southwest corner of the football bleachers, the concessions stand will also be used for boys and girls soccer and track events and possibly for tennis tournaments, he said.

Other recent improvements to the stadium include expanding the press box in 1999, improved drainage around the track in 2002 and an underground sprinkler system in 2004.

“It will be a welcome addition,” Byczak said of the concession stand. “What we’re trying to build is consistent with the quality of our other buildings.”

Chuck Albers, representing the Rotary Club, said the project fits with the group’s mission to work with youth in the community. He said a number of early major contributions toward the project would be announced soon.

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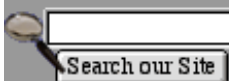
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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Mar. 01, 2005

Plans for subdivision, new De Pere school take shape

Ledgeview board OKs proposals with contingencies

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

LEDGEVIEW — A residential development near Brown County G and GV that may include a new De Pere elementary school site is a step closer to reality.

Two versions of the Dickinson Heights subdivision — one including a 19-acre school site — have received preliminary approval from the Ledgeview Town Board.

The De Pere School District continues to negotiate with developer Joel Gmack and could announce an agreement to allow a new school to move forward within the week, school Superintendent Ben Villarruel said.

The proposal would either put 67 homes and a school or 87 homes — along with two commercial lots — in the subdivision.

The Ledgeview Board approved the subdivision last week with several contingencies. Supervisors eliminated eight home lots adjacent to the school parcel and required a second entrance point on the north side of the subdivision to create better access to the school. They also required sidewalks and eliminated a cul-de-sac.

The cul-de-sac was removed in favor of a through street because “connectivity is the buzzword now,” Ledgeview clerk Sarah Burdette said.

“Keeping the school in mind, (board members) were concerned that there should be sidewalks,” Burdette said. Following its Smart Growth planning document, the town now requires all new subdivisions to have sidewalks, curb and gutter, and storm sewers.

The district already owns a school site just to the east at Bower Creek Road and County G, but it is considered less suitable for a school because a petroleum pipeline runs through it. The De Pere district bought the 22-acre parcel for \$300,000 in 1999. The property has gained in value and could be sold to raise money for another school site.

Enrollments, especially at the elementary schools and the high school, have been pushing toward capacity as several new subdivisions fill with homes.

Facility study committee

A committee of residents in the De Pere School District will hold its second meeting to explore school facility needs at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the school district offices, 1700 Chicago St. The meetings are open to the public.

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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Mar. 08, 2005

De Pere School District OKs land purchase for new school

It will spend \$859,400 for 22-acre Ledgeview parcel

By **Jim Kneiszel**

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — The De Pere School Board on Monday approved an option to purchase about 22 acres of land near Brown County G and GV for \$859,400 as a potential elementary school site.

To defray the costs of the land purchase, the district is expected to sell a school parcel it bought in 1999 just to the east at County G and Bower Creek Road, according to Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

The new school site will be centrally located among several subdivisions and a Ledgeview town center being developed in one of the fastest-growing areas in Brown County.

The school site, part of a residential plan called Dickinson Heights, figures to jumpstart the transformation of the once-sprawling farm area into an urban neighborhood. A county planner envisions the county highway being narrowed and slowed down with roundabouts to make it safer for kids walking to a new school.

“Obviously, Dickinson Road (County G) will look very different in five to 10 years,” Villarruel said Monday, adding that the school property surrounded by several subdivisions fits with Ledgeview’s new comprehensive plan.

The OK on the land purchase, following a closed session board meeting, culminates many months of shopping for real estate for a potential new school in Ledgeview. The vote was 6-0 with board member Nancy Hayes excused.

Facing bulging enrollments at its two elementary schools and high school, the district is contemplating the need for another elementary school right now.

A study committee will make recommendations in May on how to ease school overcrowding and the district has said it expects a building referendum to be on the November ballot.

The district has until August to exercise the option to purchase the land and finalize the deal, according to Villarruel. Barring any complications in the transaction, the district will pay roughly \$39,000 per acre for the school site which includes about four acres of wetlands. That compares to the 1999 purchase of land near Bower Creek Road on higher ground and with a panoramic view of metro Green Bay for \$300,000, or \$13,600 per acre.

“The previous School Board and administration was very forward-thinking,” Villarruel said of the earlier land purchase made before land values skyrocketed in Ledgeview.

"By owning that property, we were able to be a player in this area. That was very insightful and a very good decision."

The district in 2004 abandoned plans to use the Bower Creek site when a study committee determined it wouldn't be the best location for a school.

The group felt an underground petroleum pipeline and traffic concerns were too big of a safety concern to place an elementary school on the site.

Villarruel said the district will at some point put the Bower Creek property on the market, where it is expected to fetch enough to pay for the new land. In the meantime, the district will use the Wisconsin State Trust Fund Loan Program to buy the new property, he said.

The school site fits well with the town's comprehensive, or "smart growth" plan which was recently adopted, according to Cole Runge, Brown County principal planner. Runge helped Ledgeview and De Pere craft their growth plans and said a potential school would become a neighborhood school serving several subdivisions.

Part of the neighborhood school concept includes slowing area traffic and creating easy routes for pedestrian traffic, Runge explained. He envisions the County G speed limit being reduced drastically from the current 45 mph with a series of roundabouts and other traffic calming devices. At some point the highway will be narrowed, flanked by walk paths on both sides and possibly pedestrian islands at the center.

The school "would be right in the center of a residential area in that part of the town," Runge said. "The vision is to place the next elementary school in a location where kids can easily reach it on foot and by bike."

The Ledgeview Town Board in February gave preliminary approval to two versions of Dickinson Heights, one including 67 home sites and the school.

The West De Pere School District, facing similar growing pains, continues to look at several properties for a new elementary school, according to Superintendent Lanny Tibaldo. The west side district also hoped for a fall building referendum, but delays in a land purchase may push a potential referendum into 2006, he said.

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Posted Mar. 11, 2005

De Pere schools seek to close open enrollment

The Post-Gazette

DE PERE — With enrollments reaching capacity at most grade levels, the De Pere School District is expected to deny all outside open-enrollment requests for the 2005-06 school year.

This year, De Pere has received 40 applications for open enrollment — 29 from Green Bay, seven from West De Pere and four from Wrightstown.

Of those numbers, nine applications are from residents who are moving out of the district but still want their children to attend De Pere schools. The district traditionally has allowed those open enrollments to encourage a continuity of education and because the students already figure into enrollment projections, according to Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

On Monday the school board gave preliminary endorsement to a plan from administration to deny all open-enrollment applications from families whose children don't currently attend De Pere schools.

The De Pere School Board will consider 40 open-enrollment requests at its March 21 meeting. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the district offices, 1700 Chicago St.

The board — which has allowed students from outside the district boundaries in the past — is expected to deny all 31 outside applications later this month, according to Rob Lennon, director of pupil services.

With heavy residential development in recent years, the De Pere schools are fast approaching capacity, especially at the elementary schools and high school. The district is anticipating an additional 147 students to enter the schools for the coming school year.

“Last year we accepted some students at some grade levels. At this point we’re rejecting all of them,” Lennon said. “This is another message to the public that we are filling up.”

Families from outside a school district are allowed to apply for enrollment in a school district on an annual basis, but the school board can accept or deny those applications.

Based on the crowding, he said, there is no guarantee the school board will continue to allow current students who move from the district to continue at De Pere schools.



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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted Apr. 13, 2005

De Pere School Board seat available

DE PERE — Applications are being accepted through May 9 for a position on the De Pere School Board vacated last week by Susie Reinke Riddle. The board is expected to name a new board member in May for the position that runs through April 2006.

Riddle resigned effective April 1 so that she could apply for an opening for a part-time math teacher at De Pere High School, she said Monday. She was prohibited from applying while serving as a board member.

If she is turned down for the teaching position, Riddle said, she plans on re-applying for her seat on the School Board.

Board application materials must be submitted by 4 p.m. May 9 at the district offices, 1700 Chicago St. The board will interview qualified applicants on May 16.

For application materials or more information, call the district superintendent's office, (920) 337-1032.

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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted Apr. 20, 2005

New elementary school among recommendations for De Pere district

By Jim Kneiszel

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — A citizen's advisory committee will recommend the De Pere School District plan a referendum to add a new elementary school in Ledgeview and expand the high school to serve 200 more students.

The committee last week wrapped up two months of meetings to study growing enrollment in the district, which is beginning to fill the elementary schools and high school to capacity.

The district is also planning to meet short-term crowding issues by transferring four fourth-grade classes from Heritage and Dickinson Elementary schools to the Fox View Intermediate School over the next two years.

In preparing for a potential school-building program, the district earlier this month began soliciting for a contractor to build an elementary school and high school addition. The board is expected to hire a contractor by the end of May to work with its architectural firm, Somerville Inc.

"There's no getting around it. They need another elementary school," said Lynne Paplham, who will be sending her 9-year-old son, Ben, from Heritage to Foxview a year early next year. Paplham is among 20 families who have volunteered to transfer their fourth-grade children to the intermediate school.

"Even the parking lot is just a real challenge for parking and dropping off children," Paplham said of the growing enrollment at Heritage.

"There's only so much they can do to relieve (the crowding)."

The School Board will mull the committee recommendations through June and likely will make a decision whether or not to go forward with a building referendum in the fall, said Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

Villarruel on Monday said moving fourth-graders from the elementary schools to the grade 5-6 intermediate school is necessary because Heritage is over its capacity and Dickinson is fast-approaching its capacity. In January, Dickinson had 551 students in grades K-4 and a capacity of 600. Heritage had 686 students, over its 650-student limit.

"Staff and parents really put a lot of effort to keep this great grade configuration," Villarruel said of the alignment that clusters grades 5-6 at Foxview. "However, because we don't have any classroom space, we're forced to make that adjustment. It's not what we'd like to do."

The plan is to transfer two classes — or 40 students — from Heritage to Foxview for the 2005-06 school year, then move another 40 from either Heritage or Dickinson for the 2006-07 school year to ease

De Pere schools proposal

The De Pere School Board will hear expansion proposals from a citizens study committee at a meeting May 16. The advisory board is preparing a presentation for the School Board meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the board conference room in the district offices, 1700 Chicago St., De Pere.

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elementary crowding.

A pair of veteran teachers volunteered to move from Heritage to Foxview, and that helped prompt parents to volunteer to move their children over, Heritage principal Emmy Mayer said. Students who make the move will also be given the opportunity for an additional music class, and a promised 20-1 student-teacher ratio is another attraction, Mayer said.

Papllham jumped at the chance to move Ben to Foxview because her four children were set to attend four different schools in the fall. Now Ben will be able to join his older sister, Mary, at Foxview, meaning one less drop-off spot for mom.

"We're losing something by leaving Heritage, but at Foxview they do a very nice job also," Papllham said. She was happy to hear about the committee's recommendation for a new school, calling the move "long overdue."

The committee will recommend an elementary school be built to handle 650 students and a new wing on the high school to take capacity from 1,200 to 1,400 students, Villarruel said. Enrollment at the high school is projected to rise over 1,300 students for the 2007-08 school years.

After a 2000 referendum, the high school was expanded with an eye toward future growth. The core areas of the school were expanded to be able to serve 1,400 students. The committee is recommending only a classroom wing be added at this time, Villarruel said.

There's plenty of room for the high school addition, Villarruel said, and the board took care of a potential elementary school site last month when it OK'd the purchase of a 22-acre property in Ledgeview.

The purchase was for land planned within a residential development just northeast of Brown County G and GV in the fast-growing town. The board decided to spend \$859,000 for the parcel. To defray the costs of the land purchase, the district is expected to sell a school parcel it bought in 1999 just to the east at Brown County G and Bower Creek Road.

The district has until August to exercise the option to purchase the land and finalize the deal, according to Villarruel. Barring any complications in the transaction, the district will pay roughly \$39,000 per acre for the school site which includes about four acres of wetlands.

The West De Pere School District, facing similar growing pains, continues to look at several properties for a new elementary school, according to Superintendent Lanny Tibaldo. The west-side district also hoped for a fall building referendum, but delays in a land purchase may push a potential referendum into 2006, he said.

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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted May 11, 2005

De Pere district's Riddle wants to get her old job back

Former School Board member resigned post to become a teacher

By **Jim kneiszel**

jkneisze@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — Former De Pere School Board member Suse Reinke Riddle is one of 13 people who will be interviewed for the post she left last month to pursue a teaching job in the district.

Candidates will face 10-minute interviews during the May 18 School Board meeting, beginning at 6:45 p.m. The School Board is expected to choose a candidate that night to fill the term which ends in April 2006, according to Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

The interviews and selection process are part of the board's regular monthly action meeting and the process is open to the public.

Along with Riddle, candidates include Frank Arnett, Beatrice Clegg, John Foley, Richard Huxford, Douglas Jensen, David Kyto, Michael Le May, Richard Lund, Elizabeth Ogard, Paul Sauvey, Paul Summerside and Curtis Van Erem.

Riddle resigned effective April 1 so that she could apply for an opening for a part-time math teacher at De Pere High School. She was prohibited from applying while serving as a board member.

When she resigned, Riddle said she intended to re-apply for the School Board if she was turned down for the teaching job. She didn't get the teaching job.

Last week, the board welcomed new member Jon Paque, who was elected in April at the same time that Fred Fullerton was re-elected. Paque was on the board in the past and served as president at one time.

The board elected officers last week, naming Fullerton as president, Jim Growt as vice president, William Van Beek as treasurer and Sandy Mentzel as secretary. The board also decided to continue holding meetings on the first and third Mondays at 6:30 p.m.

The board left salaries for members unchanged for the 2005-06 school year. Officers will receive \$2,500 annually and all other members will receive \$2,250.

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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted May 18, 2005

Unsuitable school lot extends De Pere board's search

By **Jim Kneiszel**

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DE PERE — The real estate hunt is back on for the De Pere School District after the School Board on Monday decided to back away from the purchase of about 22 acres in Ledgeview for a new elementary school.

Recently it was learned that the property near Brown County G and GV has a high water table and is not suitable for a potential elementary school complex. An engineering study showed the property would require \$600,000 in compacted soil to raise the grade for construction.

"We didn't feel the price was economically feasible. The price just didn't make sense," said Fred Fullerton, the School Board president. "We're clearly not only thinking of our needs as a school district, but of the taxpayers we represent. We're all taxpayers, too."

After months of searching, the board earlier this year approved an option to purchase the land for \$859,400 as a potential elementary school site. The school would have been within a residential development called Dickinson Heights, just to the northeast of Ledgeview's emerging town center.

The purchase price was about \$39,000 per acre. The estimated fill would have added about \$27,000 per acre to the land cost, meaning the district would have spent \$66,000 per acre to create an adequate building site.

The district had until the end of May to exercise the option on the property, but the board rejected it at a meeting Monday, according to Ben Villarruel, the school superintendent. The district will continue to look for property in Ledgeview, Rockland and De Pere areas for a possible school to alleviate crowding at the elementary schools.

Developer/builder Joel Gmack, who owns the Dickinson Heights property, said the subdivision will move forward with or without the school. The Ledgeview Town Board in February approved two versions of the development, one with 67 homes and the school and one with 87 homes.

Gmack said he is hopeful a deal can still be struck to allow the school to become part of the development that he said will contain "mid-level" family homes of 2,000 to 3,500 square feet and priced up to \$350,000. He said the school would bring family buyers.

"There's the small downside of having a school, a light commercial building, in your neighborhood. You have to build around that. But definitely, the positives outweigh the negatives," he said.

The district in 1999 bought property along County G near Bower Creek Road for future school use. But plans to use that site for a school were stymied over concerns about an underground gasoline pipeline running through the property. That parcel was purchased for \$300,000, or \$13,600 per acre, and is

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expected to be sold eventually to defray the costs of buying another school site.

Villarruel said the board hoped to purchase property for a potential school before it approaches residents with a building referendum as early as this November. Losing the land has no impact on those plans, Villarruel said.

"We continue to work with De Pere and Ledgeview and Brown County to find a parcel that will make sense," Villarruel said. He noted the Dickinson Heights location — surrounded by homes and near to a development center — fit the county's Smart Growth plans.

Gmack said that, despite being too early for a marketing effort, the development is already attracting calls from interested homebuyers. He said the subdivision and Ledgeview in general are seeming to overcome what he termed an "overbuilt market" over the past two years.

"It's one of the areas in Brown County that continue to overcome a little down streak here. I think that area will continue to be a hot sell," Gmack said.

A citizen advisory committee has recommended the district build a new elementary school to handle 650 students to ease crowding in the early grades and to build classrooms at the high school to expand capacity from 1,200 to 1,400 students.

The West De Pere School District, facing similar growing pains, continues to look at properties for a new elementary school, according to Superintendent Lanny Tibaldo. The west-side district also hoped for a fall building referendum, but delays in a land purchase may push a potential referendum into 2006, he said.

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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted May 18, 2005

Summerside to fill De Pere School Board seat

By **Jim Kneiszel**

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DE PERE — The De Pere School Board on Monday chose Paul Summerside from a field of 10 candidates to serve out the remaining year of a seat vacated by Suse Reinke Riddle a month ago.

Riddle left the board to apply for a teaching position in the district. When she didn't get the teaching job, she reapplied for the school board seat and was one of the candidates interviewed.

On Tuesday, Riddle was critical of board members for not choosing her to fill out the term she was elected to by district voters.

"I was surprised that the board would not respect the public sentiment from the original vote," she said. "The public returned me to the board resoundingly for two terms."

Riddle said that when she resigned from the board, she explained that she was required to do so to seek a math teaching job. She told board members she intended to reapply for her seat if she didn't get the job. She said she would have welcomed back other board members who resigned under the same circumstances.

"I thought they would respect the will of the community. That was my expectation," said Riddle, who said she would mull a run for the board again in 2006.

Last week, one of 13 then candidates for the open seat, Richard Huxford, told the Green Bay Press-Gazette he was withdrawing from the board interviews because he felt Riddle should be returned to the post she was elected to serve. Two other candidates dropped out of the field before the meeting Monday.

School Board president Fred Fullerton would not comment on Riddle's criticism, but said he was impressed and surprised with the applicants.

"First I was amazed by the sheer number of candidates and qualified candidates that applied," he said. "The first thing I was thinking was, where were these people during the elections? Holy cow."

Summerside is a parent of five De Pere students and the chief medical officer and president of the board of directors of Aurora BayCare Medical Center. The other finalist for the seat was Douglas Jensen, currently the dean of the general studies division at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. The group also included previous School Board candidates and members of volunteer citizen committees in the past.

After interviewing the candidates, the board took a vote to narrow the field to five. Another vote settled on Summerside and Jensen. Summerside was elected on a 5-1 vote, with John Paque giving Jensen his lone vote.

Fullerton said each of the board members would have brought valuable experience. He said the process

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was fair and the interviews and votes were all taken during the open meeting.

“I truly felt they were all qualified,” he said. “I didn’t care who we ended up with. Any one of them would have been good and served our community well.”

Summerside’s seat will be up for election in April.

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Posted June 21, 2005

De Pere studies \$19M school referendum

Committee urges new elementary building, high school expansion

By Jim Kneiszel

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DE PERE — A referendum approaching \$19 million may be in the offing for De Pere School District voters this fall for a proposed 650-student elementary school and a 200-student expansion at the high school.

School board members on the east side of the Fox River accepted a report Monday from a citizens' committee recommending the new school and high school expansion.

The board is planning a July 11 informational meeting for residents and is expected to make a final decision on a referendum the following week. A letter regarding the meeting will go out to all district residents this week.

The district has a tentative timeline calling for a November referendum to add classrooms and ease expected school crowding by the start of the 2007-08 school year.

Architects have reported the cost of the elementary school will range \$13.4 to \$16.2 million, while the high school addition would cost about \$3.3 million. In its report, the facilities committee said the high school addition should include eight general classrooms in addition to science, art and special needs classrooms and expand capacity to 1,400 students.

Across the Fox River, the West De Pere School Board is forming a facility study committee by September to look at options to ease expected crowding in that district.

Both De Pere and West De Pere are fast-growing districts, gaining more than 100 students each per year over several years, and they face imminent shortages of classroom space.

Both have been looking to purchase about 20 acres for new elementary schools. And both have been aiming for building referendums.

The De Pere facilities committee also recommended the district begin looking into enrollment trends at the high school immediately after the upcoming referendum.

Dozens of residents volunteered for the committee and discarded a number of options to address crowding. They were:

- Do nothing and purchase or lease portable classrooms when enrollments reached capacity during 2007-08.

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- Add space for 600 students at existing Dickinson and Heritage elementary schools and 200 students at the high school at an estimated cost of \$16 million.

- Build a new elementary school with core facilities for 650 students and seats for only 350 students to be expanded when necessary at a cost of \$14.7 to \$17.7 million.

In April, 37 committee members voted unanimously to support building a new elementary school and adding to the high school.

This would be the third school referendum in a decade for De Pere, which added Heritage Elementary School in Ledgeview after a 1996 vote and expanded the high school, made improvements at Dickinson Elementary School and renovated the old middle school as Foxview Intermediate School after a 2000 vote.

Superintendent Ben Villarruel said the district always anticipated enrollment growth but was conservative with building initiatives so it wouldn't overbuild at the taxpayer's expense.

"You want to be careful not to go too far out so you don't have dead space that's not being used by the district," he said of multiple referendums.

He said that during the 2000 referendum, there was no talk of sewer and water lines running deep into Ledgeview and south of Rockland Road. Today those service expansions are a reality and will add many new homes with school-age children.

The public information meeting will allow residents to react to the committee's report before the board authorizes a referendum, Villarruel said. The board would have to approve of a referendum at its July 18 meeting to stay on track with a fall 2007 school opening, he said.

De Pere had planned to purchase a property near Brown County G and GV for a new school, but that deal failed to materialize. The district continues to look at other properties in the Ledgeview area.

West De Pere has been slowed in its efforts to purchase a 15- to 20-acre property for a new elementary school, according to Superintendent Lanny Tibaldo.

For property west of U.S. 41, the district is facing concerns over flight paths near Austin Straubel International Airport, natural gas pipelines and competition from developers.

The district now is considering buying two elementary school sites — one west of U.S. 41 for a school now and one to the south in Lawrence for a future school — to handle big enrollment spikes expected to continue.

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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted June 22, 2005

De Pere district buys property in Rockland

Elementary school planned for 40-acre site

By **Jim Kneiszel**

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DE PERE — The De Pere School District has taken an option to buy nearly 40 acres of farmland in Rockland for \$1.5 million to use as an elementary school site.

The land south of Rockland Road abuts a new subdivision recently annexed into De Pere, and annexation into the city is a condition of the school land deal.

A month ago, the school district dropped an option to buy about 22 acres near Brown County G and GV in Ledgeview because of concerns over a high water table.

The district came to terms recently with the Rockland property owners, Irvin and Viola Peeters. The School Board approved the option to purchase late Monday on a 5-0 vote with one abstention from member Nancy Hayes, who said her family owns property in the area.

The property, totaling 38.61 acres, would be the location for a new elementary school, but it is also big enough to hold a second school if De Pere continues its heavy growth pattern, according to Ben Villarruel, the school superintendent.

"All along, the goal was to be in an area with high density residential development," Villarruel said. "So not being able to obtain a parcel in Ledgeview, we set our sights on the Rockland area."

Villarruel said the large parcel would give the School Board options for growth in the future, allowing for a "campus-like" effect if multiple new schools are required.

"We're pleased to find a site that would meet our immediate needs and have the potential for another school building in 10 to 15 years," Villarruel said. "We know our district will continue to grow and the land in urban areas is not to be had."

The district has offered \$40,000 per acre, or a total of \$1,544,400 for the land and can extend the option through the end of September. Villarruel said the district will begin annexation proceedings immediately.

Also on Monday, the school board accepted a report from a facilities study committee that recommends the district add a new elementary school for 650 students and an addition to the high school. Estimates show the plan could cost about \$19 million. In July, the board will decide whether to move forward with a referendum on the school projects.

To learn more

A public information meeting about the recommendations from a De Pere School District facility study committee will be held at 6:30 p.m. July 11 at Heritage Elementary School, 1250 Swan Road. Residents may read the committee report at the district's Web site, www.depere.k12.wi.us, or pick up a copy of the report at the district offices, 1700 Chicago St.

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While the Rockland site is a departure from the failed Ledgeview land purchase, it is a comparable location in terms of potential for residential development, Villarruel said. He and city planner Bill Patzke say the area is poised for much more suburban development.

“Look at what happened at Heritage Elementary. Houses are just popping up like dandelions out there,” Patzke said, referring to the residential boom around the Ledgeview school that was constructed after a 1996 referendum.

Road construction is under way at Trailside Estates, just to the north of the Rockland school site. Patzke said the first house could be up and occupied later this year. Trailside’s 180 home sites are just the beginning for the area, which has sewer and water capacity to fill in with many residential developments, Patzke said.

Patzke, who served on recent citizens advisory committees for the school, said he believes the district should continue to pursue land in Ledgeview to provide a school for a subdivision near County G and GV, including the large Mystery Valley development. He said the district may have to look farther out into the country for land for a future Ledgeview school.

The annexation should not be complicated because it involves a single property and one landowner seeking to join the city, Patzke said.

There has been continuing tension between De Pere and Rockland over recent annexations. Rockland would like to negotiate a boundary agreement to slow its eroding border.

Rockland landowner Hubert Wendricks said the school property will spur other property owners to seek annexation to the city, where they can sell land for lucrative residential development. He said Rockland is ripe to lose a lot more tax base to the city.

“You can’t blame the Rockland residents wanting to annex to De Pere where they can sell and do a lot better,” Wendricks said. “More power to them. Rockland has got nothing to offer.”

Wendricks and others have been critical of the town’s zoning requirements for minimum two- and five-acre homebuilding sites. They say moving into De Pere would allow them to use sewer and water service. In addition to his homestead, Wendricks owns 30 acres of desirable land along the Fox River Trail.

“That’s an awful lot of money,” Wendricks said of the price Peeters is getting and that might be available to other area landowners in the future. “But what do you do with money if you don’t need it? I came up the hard way and I’m not used to spending money. I enjoy a lot of other things.”

Near the school site, Rockland Road poses a few challenges for the future, according to Cole Runge, Brown County’s principal planner. Rockland Road is earmarked for the southern bypass around metro Green Bay and may become a busy thoroughfare in the future.

Runge said planners would like to see the nearby Fox River Trail go over or under the road in the future for safer pedestrian or bicycle traffic. A potential school entrance would be along Ryan Road, which isn’t as busy as Rockland Road.

Runge also pointed out that the city’s new Smart Growth comprehensive plan calls for heavy development in the area over the next 10-20 years.

The Ledgeview property totaled about 22 acres and the district was planning to buy it for \$859,400, or about \$39,000 per acre. But the district learned that the site required \$600,000 in compacted soil to raise the grade for construction. That would have raised the per-acre price to about \$65,000.

The district in 1999 bought property along County G near Bower Creek Road for future school use. Plans to use that site for a school were stymied over concerns about an underground gasoline pipeline running through the property. That parcel was purchased for \$300,000, or \$13,600 per acre, and is expected to be sold eventually to defray the costs of buying the Rockland site.

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Posted July 12, 2005

Residents air De Pere school expansion concerns

By Patti Zarling

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LEDGEVIEW — Chris Seiberlich of De Pere agrees the De Pere School District needs more classroom space. But she's not necessarily in favor of building a new school.

"We need to find ways to cut down; this stuff adds up," she said Tuesday. "We don't need the Taj Mahal of schools. We need functional schools. And we need better planning to make sure we're not all back here in another few years."

Seiberlich was one of about 15 people who spoke at a public hearing held by the district's Facility Advisory Committee at Heritage Elementary School on Tuesday. About 75 people attended the meeting, many of them members of the committee.

During the hearing, people were encouraged to share their thoughts about the committee's recommendation to build a new elementary school and to expand the current high school to accommodate 200 additional students. Neither the committee nor School Board answered questions or responded to comments, because they didn't want the forum to turn into a debate.

Like several others who stepped up to the microphone, Seiberlich encouraged the district to consider merging with the West De Pere School District.

"There's no way a population of 20,000 needs two school districts," she said. "I've lived here for seven years, and I've worked for the Green Bay School District, which is much bigger and has just one administrator. They all have quality schools ... if the two De Pere districts merged, we could build one high school instead of two."

De Pere resident Bill Blythin agreed.

"It seems obvious there should be some dollar savings in administration, custodial and program costs," he said. "That money could be used to add teachers, or increase the salaries of the teachers we have."

Others were concerned about the location of the proposed new elementary school. The district recently agreed to buy about 40 acres of farmland south of Rockland Road in the town of Rockland with the intent of building a school.

"My concern as a resident of Rockland ... is that it's not the right area," Steve Smits said. "The growth is in Ledgeview. That's where the school should go."

Anne Ericksen of De Pere, a former teacher and substitute teacher for the district who also has children attending school, favors building a new facility.

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“We’re overcrowded and we need to do something,” she said. “I’ve seen and been in classrooms — I know.”

But she thinks creating the boundaries for a new school should be set before a referendum is scheduled.

“I bought my lot specifically because I thought my kids would be attending Heritage,” she said. “If there’s a chance I’ll be busing my kids half an hour, I want to know that.”

Still others suggested School District offices be moved out of the high school to create more classroom space and that the district take a closer look at the costs of expanding current buildings.

The 42-member Advisory Committee met for about two months and made its recommendation to the School Board in April.

The proposed plan for an elementary school and addition to the high school would cost about \$19 million, but that price tag doesn’t include the cost of teachers, staff, furniture, maintenance or land acquisition.

“We feel we looked at all the information out there, and based on that, this is what we would recommend,” said committee member Rose Hogan.

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Posted July 19, 2005

Board OK's plans to build new De Pere elementary school

District can borrow up to \$1.5 million to buy Rockland land

By Mike Hoeft

mhoeft@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — The De Pere School Board moved forward Monday with plans to build a new elementary school by authorizing the district to borrow up to \$1.5 million to buy about 40 acres of farmland south of Rockland Road in the town of Rockland.

The board may not actually borrow that much since the district may sell land it owns in Ledgeview to offset the Rockland purchase, said Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

The district expects to close the land buy in early September and pay 3 percent interest on the loan.

The loan does not require passage by referendum. However, a referendum could be called if a petition is filed within 30 days and signed by 7,500 district voters.

The land south of Rockland Road abuts a new subdivision recently annexed into De Pere, and annexation into the city is a condition of the school land deal.

The district in 1999 bought property along County G near Bower Creek Road for future school use.

Plans to use that site for a school were stymied over concerns about an underground gasoline pipeline running through the property.

That parcel was purchased for \$300,000, or \$13,600 per acre, and is expected to be sold eventually to defray the costs of buying the Rockland site.

Two months ago, the school district dropped an option to buy about 22 acres near Brown County G and GV in Ledgeview because of concerns over a high water table.

On Monday, the board also accepted three recommendations by a citizens' facility advisory committee on a new building program:

- Build a new elementary school to accommodate 650 students.
- Build an addition to the high school to accommodate 200 students.

What's next

The De Pere School Board set a special meeting for 6:30 p.m. Aug. 22 to discuss its building program. The meeting will be at the district office, 1700 Chicago St., De Pere.

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- Begin a study of future high school planning upon completion of the pending referendum.

The proposed plan for an elementary school and addition to the high school would cost about \$19 million.

Villarruel said the board's action on accepting the committee's recommendations will allow an architect to begin a preliminary design of the building to determine costs.

Those costs would be included in a building referendum that likely would go to voters in November, he said.

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De Pere Journal

Posted Aug. 18, 2005

De Pere school budget gets OK

By Adam Hardy

The De Pere Unified School Board voted unanimously Monday night to adopt a proposed 2005-06 school budget.

Though there was no contention over the budget itself, some board members had fiscal concerns about what the numbers could mean for years to come.

“This is preliminary at best,” said board member Bill Van Beek. “Once we get through (this year), there is no more money in the cookie jar.”

This year’s budget follows a trend from previous years, showing a slimming surplus of slightly more than \$165,000 for 2005-06. Budgetary excesses for 2004-05 were roughly \$274,000.

This dwindling surplus is made all the more pressing as the decision to purchase land in Rockland for a new elementary school comes to head next Monday, Aug. 22, at a special school-board meeting that will be held at 6 p.m. in the board’s conference room.

The budget assumes an enrollment increase of 146 students and the addition of 14.87 full-time certified employees.

Estimated general expenditures for the next year will total \$29.1 million, up more than \$2 million from last year and almost \$4 million for 2003-04.

Increases of more than \$1.1 million for K-5 programs represented the largest dollar difference from last year’s budget, followed by a projected uptick of just more than \$1 million for costs related to school-building administration.

Operating expenses are predicted to actually fall for several areas, including more than \$400,000 savings on fund-transfer costs and almost \$300,000 cut from instructional-communication services, such as district newsletters, information processing and postage.

On the revenue side of the ledger, the Unified School District general fund tax levy will rise to a calculated \$9 million, up 3 percent from last year.

The debt-service fund will inflate by a similar rate, with revenue of a bit more than \$5.2 million.

Based on the assumption that the district’s equalized valuation will grow by approximately 8 percent, the budget projects that the total equalized mill rate will be \$10.54 per \$1,000, down from \$11.05 for the preceding several years.

De Pere Journal

Posted Aug. 25, 2005

New School on Drawing board

School board gives OK for purchasing Rockland site; referendum pending in November.

By Adam Hardy

The De Pere School Board cast a unanimous vote at a special meeting Monday night to purchase 40 acres in the town of Rockland for a new, 650-student elementary school.

Closing on the property has been set for late September or early October of this year.

Members of the board heard from representatives of Miron Construction Inc. and design group Somerville Inc. about potential plans and costs for both the new elementary school and upcoming additions to the De Pere High School building.

A resolution for adopting specific design plans for both building projects will be drafted in committee and reported on at the next school-board meeting, Sept. 6.

The board will vote on two finalized concept plans Sept. 16 prior to a citywide referendum, which has been scheduled to take place this November, according to a school-board calendar.

If the referendum passes, the board plans to open the new elementary facility in September 2007.

A design plan for the 114,474 square foot school currently under consideration by the board would cost the district \$138.63 per square foot, totaling just less than \$15.87 million.

Big-ticket items include more than \$2.2 million for masonry; \$1.34 million for ductwork, cooling and heating; a \$1.14 million electrical system; and \$805,000 for labor and equipment related to concrete. Miron will collect \$248,912, or 1.75 percent of the total cost, and the district will pay a design fee of \$832,164.

The two-story elementary building, per a concept drawing rendered by Somerville, would feature a central commons lunch area for use as both a lunchroom and theater. Two wings stretching from the commons would house one grade per floor, from K-2, and a joint floor for third and fourth-graders. The gym would accommodate bleachers for 400.

Members of the board did not question the design of the school itself, but they did take exception to its placement on the property after Lawrence LaPage, vice president of the education, design group at Somerville, said a high school will never fit on the parcel.

"I guess I really didn't know until this point that we wouldn't be able to get a high school onto (the site)," said Sandy Mentzel, school-board member.

Under the current design plans, the school sits just off Ryan Road as part of a plan to allow easy access for walkers, LePage said.

While the building itself covers less than a third of the 40-acre parcel, parking for 130 cars, bus drop-off and pick-up, two 10,000 square foot play areas, sports fields and retention ponds take up more than half the site. LePage said this leave little room for student parking and a football stadium, all of which are necessary for a high school. The site would more easily accommodate a middle school, LePage said.

The board requested an alternative plan from LePage that would place the school farther into the northwest corner of the site. Members of the board will review the revised plan at their next meeting.

The board also inspected two proposed high school additions that would add 24,589 square feet to the building, including a two-story addition to the east side of the building for 12 new classrooms, a language-arts area and a secured entrance lobby. A new art room, with capacity for 70 students, also would be added on the west side of the school, just south of the administrative offices.

The current design has a price tag of more than \$3.6 million, or \$147.47 a square foot, including \$563,086 in masonry and \$409,625 in steel.

Two major design changes were discussed by the board, including squaring a triangular outcrop on the art room and roughing in pipes to some of the new classrooms so they can be easily converted into science rooms if necessary.

In addition to looking over the increased costs of proposed changes, the board agreed that it would confer with experts prior to making its final decision Sept. 16 and would welcome input from the community.



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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted Sept. 20, 2005

De Pere School Board sets \$21M referendum

DE PERE — Voters in the De Pere School District will go to the polls on Nov. 8 to decide a \$21 million school expansion plan.

The De Pere School Board on Monday authorized the special election on whether to build a new elementary school and improvements to the high school to accommodate 850 new students.

The plan includes:

- \$15.86 million for a new elementary school in Rockland.
- \$3.66 million for an addition to the high school.
- \$1.5 million to finance the purchase of about 40 acres of farmland for the new school.

In addition, the board approved spending \$600,000 over revenue limits to pay for staffing and operating costs of the school expansion.

— Mike Hoeft/Press-Gazette

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Posted Sept. 09, 2005

De Pere High School snacks sacked

Soda, chips, candy banished from vending machines

By Kelly McBride

kmcbride@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — Grabbing that morning caffeine jolt or midday sugar fix has gotten a little tougher for students at De Pere High School.

Ravenous Redbirds still can bring their own soda, chips or candy, but they won't find anything resembling junk food in school vending machines.

That's because the 2005-06 school year has ushered in a strict new set of guidelines for in-school vending machine fare.

"We have become more and more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of eating in certain ways," said De Pere High School principal Matt Weller. "I think people are much more aware of the relationship between what they eat and how they feel."

And De Pere isn't alone. Along with their push to decrease junk and increase nutritional content in school lunch, many school districts also are placing limits on the pre-packaged food and drink that have become a mainstay for some middle- and high-school-aged students.

At De Pere, soda is out. Milk, juice, water and some sports drinks are in. Candy and greasy potato chips are gone, too; the chips' baked cousins have been allowed to stay.

It's all part of encouraging healthy lifestyle choices, said De Pere School District Superintendent Ben Villarruel. Concentration and ability to learn can be affected by nutrition, he said.

Still, some Redbirds see the nutrition choice as one the district shouldn't be making for them.



De Pere High School student Ryan Gloe, 15, stops by the vending machine Thursday for a bottle of water before heading off to an after-school activity. Photo by Patrick Ferron/Press-Gazette

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Snacking by the rules

The following guidelines govern vending and nonvending food sales at De Pere High School:

1. Beverages

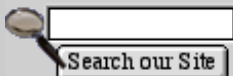
- Soda sales are forbidden.
- Milk, water, 100 percent fruit juice and glucose-based sports drinks can be sold.
- Nonvending sales of soda or artificially sweetened drinks can occur only at school events that begin after the school day ends.

2. Candy

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"It's stupid," said De Pere senior Samantha Austin, "especially when you're 18. When you're 18, you should do what you want. ... If you're old enough to smoke, you're old enough to eat junk food."

Eighteen-year-old classmate T.J. Kros agrees with Austin. Kros used to start his day with a Mountain Dew and a candy bar from the school vending machines, he said. Now, he usually still starts with the soda — he just buys it before he comes to school.

"How much money is the school losing off this?" Kros said. "We're still getting soda; we're just running to the gas stations."

Still, for many students, choosing milk or water over soda is a decision all their own, said Sue Baier, food service director for the Green Bay School District. The four Green Bay high schools also ditched soda this year, Baier said, but sales of the bubbly beverage had decreased in years prior to that.

"I just think it's a healthy choice, first of all, to get their total water consumption in a day," Baier said. "Our soda sales were down. ... It kind of fits the trend with the time."

Green Bay also has changed its vending machine snack offerings, albeit a bit more gradually, Baier said. Baked chips and smaller serving sizes are indicative of the change.

A similar approach might be more palatable to Austin and her peers, she said. Instead of switching from a mostly junk selection to an exclusively healthy one, Austin said it'd be better to offer both options in equal proportions.

As it is, finding enough healthy snacks to fill the machines has been a challenge, Weller said. Wednesday morning, one snack machine sat empty while another was half-full of baked Lays, Ruffles and Cheetos.

Still, Weller is optimistic healthy choices early on will help students make better decisions later in life. Many faculty members agree, he said, despite the fact that there's still soda to be found in De Pere High School.

"Most of the adults think it's a pretty shrewd move," Weller said. "The district has not tackled the pop machine in the staff room."

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- Vending sales of candy are not allowed on school grounds.

- Nonvending sales of candy are allowed after the school day ends.

- Candy is defined as any item that has sugar listed as one of the first two ingredients.

3. Food

- Any food sold before school or throughout the day can have no more than 30 percent of its total calories derived from fat, and no more than 10 percent from saturated fat.

- Nuts and seeds are exempt from these standards because they are nutrient-dense and contain high levels of monounsaturated fat.

- On rare occasions, the school principal may allow a group to deviate from these guidelines.

Snacking by the numbers

Calorie and fat content of some traditional vending-machine favorites:

- **Coke**, 12 ounces: 160 calories, 0 fat grams

- **Mountain Dew Code Red**, 14 ounces: 193 calories, 0 fat grams

- **Baby Ruth bar**, 2.1 ounces: 278 calories, 15 fat grams

- **Doritos four-cheese flavor**, 60 grams: 303 calories, 16.2 fat grams

- **Kit-Kat bar**, 46 grams: 238 calories, 12.5 fat grams

Source: www.calorie-count.com



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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted Oct. 25, 2005

De Pere schools spending up; tax levy holds steady

By Mike Hoeft

mhoeft@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — Despite an 8.5 percent rise in spending for 2005-06, the De Pere School District tax levy will remain flat next year.

The De Pere School Board on Monday approved a revised 2005-06 budget, which calls for general fund expenditures of \$29,360,550. That's up from last year's \$27,061,178 general fund budget.

However, the district received more state aid than anticipated, up 14 percent from last year, said Sue Buchholz, director of business services.

The total tax levy for 2005-06 is \$13,720,394, down 0.74 percent from the 2004-05 tax levy of \$13,822,614.

"Hopefully, that's good news for taxpayers," Buchholz said.

The district's enrollment climbed this fall by 140 students for a total of 3,519 students districtwide for 2005-06.

A building boom east of the Fox River is bringing in more tax money and allowing the district to hold the line on taxes despite growing enrollment. Property value in the district is up about 8 percent.

The equalized mill rate dropped 11.53 percent from last year to \$9.77 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation. However, this is not the amount property owners will see on their tax bill. Tax bills are based on assessed value, which varies by municipality.

There are seven municipalities in the De Pere School District. They are De Pere, Ledgeview, Rockland, Glenmore, Bellevue, Morrison and the town of Wrightstown.

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2005-06 budget

• **General fund budget:** \$29,360,550, up 8.5 percent from \$27,061,178 last year.

• **Tax levy:** \$13,720,394, down 0.74 percent from \$13,822,614 last year.

• **Equalized tax rate:** \$9.77 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation, down 11.53 percent from \$11.05 in 2004-05. This is not the amount you will see on your tax bill. Tax bills are based on assessed value, which varies by municipality. Total tax bills also include school and municipal taxes.

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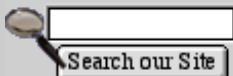
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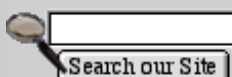
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LOCAL NEWS

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Posted Nov. 05, 2005

De Pere schools' space scarce

Voters to consider \$21 million expansion

By Mike Hoeft

mhoeft@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — If voters do not approve a De Pere school expansion plan on Tuesday, district officials warn that they may have to rent portable classrooms or other building space in 2007 to accommodate new students.

This year, two fourth-grade classes were moved from elementary schools to Foxview Intermediate School to accommodate enrollment increases, said Superintendent Ben Villarruel. Next year, two additional fourth-grade classes will be moved. By the 2007-08 school year, the shuffling option runs out as no extra classrooms will be available.

"De Pere is growing so fast, I think they should build new classrooms," said resident Florence Haskins, who has grandchildren attending De Pere schools.

"The district is going to need new buildings," she said.

On Tuesday, voters in the district will be asked to approve a \$21 million expansion plan for a new elementary school in Rockland and improvements to the high school to accommodate 850 new students.

The plan includes:

- \$15.86 million for a new elementary school in Rockland.
- \$1.5 million to finance the purchase of about 40 acres of farmland for the new school.
- \$3.66 million for an addition to the high school.

A second question will ask whether the district can exceed revenue limits by \$600,000 to pay for staffing and operating costs of the school expansion.

The city of De Pere anticipates that close to 6,000 new



Nancy Schofield's kindergarten class works on an art project Friday at Heritage Elementary School in De Pere. H. Marc Larson/Press-Gazette

De Pere School District enrollment

Current capacity: 3,700

 Current enrollment:
 3,496

Projected enrollment

2006-07: 3,629

2007-08: 3,767

2008-09: 3,862

2009-10: 3,916

2010-11: 4,039

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residents will move within its borders in the next 20 years.

If the two proposals pass, the tax impact is projected to be 30 cents per \$1,000 of equalized valuation, or \$30 on a house worth \$100,000. However, this is not the amount homeowners would see on their tax bills. Tax bills are based on assessed value, which varies by municipality. The De Pere School District includes seven municipalities: De Pere, Ledgeview, Rockland, Glenmore, Bellevue, Morrison and the town of Wrightstown.

A citizens group has sponsored two informational meetings on the referendum issue.

"We've had good questions about what's happening in our schools," Villarruel said.

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2 questions

Voters in the De Pere School District will vote Tuesday on two questions:

- Yes or no on authorizing general obligation bonds not to exceed \$21 million to build a new elementary school and improvements to the high school to accommodate 850 new students.

- Yes or no on authorizing the district to exceed revenue limits by \$600,000 to pay for staffing and operating costs of the school expansion.

To learn more

More information available online at www.depere.k12.wi.us.

Questions and Answers

Some frequently asked questions about the plan:

Q. Would it be cheaper to add classrooms to Heritage and Dickinson elementary schools as opposed to building a new elementary school?

A. The Citizens' Facility Committee studied this question extensively. In order to expand Heritage and Dickinson elementary schools, the district would need to enlarge core facilities such as the cafeteria, gymnasium, library, and the art and music classrooms. Based on architect's calculations, the cost of adding 300 more seats to Heritage and Dickinson schools is \$14.8 million. The cost of building a new elementary school that seats 650 students is \$15.8 million. The committee also felt that

elementary schools with an enrollment of 900 to 950 students would not be conducive to meeting district educational goals.

Q. If a third elementary school is built, what will the attendance boundaries look like?

A. If the referendum passes, the district will begin a process to establish new attendance boundaries a year before the school is scheduled to open.

Q. Would merging with the West De Pere School District help accommodate the new growth in the district?

A. Both districts are experiencing significant enrollment growth and need to engage in building programs. Neither school district is able to absorb the enrollment growth that is occurring in their own district without engaging in an expansion of their facilities.

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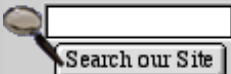
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Posted Nov. 09, 2005

De Pere school expansion approved

By Mike Hoeft

mhoeft@greenbaypressgazette.com

DE PERE — With the approval of a \$21 million school expansion plan, community leaders now will look to begin designing a new elementary school to open in 2007.

"As former athletic director Rod Kowalczyk was fond of saying, 'It's a great day to be a Redbird,' " said Superintendent Ben Villarruel.

"On a serious note, we are very pleased with the outcome and look forward to have a permanent solution to enrollment growth," Villarruel said.

The \$21 million expansion plan calls for construction of a new elementary school in Rockland and improvements to the high school to accommodate 850 new students.

Unofficial results showed the school building plan passed 1,288 to 1,052. A second question on whether the district can exceed revenue limits by \$600,000 to pay for staffing and operating the school expansion squeaked through by a vote of 1,174 to 1,154.

"Decisions on budget and education are really local decisions," said Dan Giovannini of De Pere, who voted in favor of both questions. He said the state was out of line to require public approval when exceeding revenue limits.

Vickie Seeman of De Pere also supported both resolutions.

"We need a new elementary. We're full. I don't want a school that's too big," she said.

Options included expanding Heritage and Dickinson elementary schools.

But Leo Witcpalek disagreed, saying he voted no because he felt the district overpaid for the site.

The district will pay \$1.5 million for 40 acres of farmland for a



Alan Schrank, 18, a senior at De Pere High School, votes Tuesday at the Ledgeview Municipal Building on the De Pere School District's referendum authorizing \$21 million to help fund a new school. Evan Siegle/Press-Gazette

Unofficial results

Should the De Pere School District borrow \$21 million to build a new elementary school and upgrade the high school?

• **Yes: 1,288**

No: 1,052

Should the De Pere School District be allowed to exceed revenue limits by \$600,000 to pay for staffing and operating costs of the school expansion?

• **Yes: 1,174**

No: 1,154

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new elementary school site. The building will cost \$15.86 million. The addition to the high school will cost \$3.66 million.

A breakdown of votes showed both issues passed in De Pere and Ledgeview, but failed in Glenmore, Morrison and Rockland.

District officials warned that if the school proposal did not pass they would likely have to rent portable classrooms or lease building space in 2007 to accommodate new students.

The city of De Pere anticipates that close to 6,000 new residents will move within its borders in the next 20 years.

Current enrollment in the De Pere School District is 3,496. Capacity is 3,700.

Projected enrollment shows capacity will be reached by the 2007-08 school year with 3,767 students. Enrollment is expected to climb to 3,862 in 2008-09, 3,916 in 2009-10, and 4,039 in 2010-11.

Villarruel said the next step will be working with architects and general contractor to design the new elementary school and high school addition.

"We hope to break ground in March on construction at both schools," he said. Opening is scheduled for September of 2007.

The De Pere School District includes seven municipalities: De Pere, Ledgeview, Rockland, Glenmore, Bellevue, Morrison and the town of Wrightstown.

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Work to begin soon on De Pere elementary

New \$16.3M school scheduled to open in fall '07

By [Patti Zarling](#)

pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com March 19, 2006

DE PERE — With warm weather fast approaching, bulldozers soon will be moving dirt to make way for a new De Pere elementary school in the town of Rockland.

A new \$16.3 million grade school near Ryan Road and Brown County PP will open its doors in the fall of 2007. The school is necessary, administrators say, because the school district is growing by leaps and bounds

Plans for the new school include a two-story building with wings on either side. It will be a full-sized school with a gym, library and commons, said School Superintendent Ben Villarruel. And the district also thought ahead: the plot is big enough to accommodate a future undetermined building, possibly a high school, depending on district needs.

The future school is designed to serve 650 students, though that many won't be enrolled when it first opens its doors, Villarruel said. The school will house kindergarten to fourth grade. Emmy Mayer, currently the principal at Heritage Elementary, will move to the new school.

The student body will be a mix of kids from Dickinson and Heritage, Villarruel said, and school lines will be redrawn sometime in the next year.

"Our community and student population continue to grow," Villarruel said. "We're already over capacity. We've had to displace students."

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Meeting set for Monday on De Pere school boundaries

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Gannett Wisconsin Newspapers July 6, 2006

DE PERE — The De Pere School District will have an organizational meeting Monday regarding the establishment of new attendance boundaries for its elementary schools.

The public meeting will be from 4 to 5 p.m. at the De Pere High School student resource room. The entrance is through the district office, 1700 Chicago St., on the west side of the high school.

An advisory committee of 21 community members will convene to discuss its purpose and expectations.

The committee will continue to meet the next few months to study boundaries for the district's two existing elementary schools — Dickinson and Heritage — and a third that will open in September 2007. A recommendation from the committee is to be presented to the School Board in October. The board will establish the attendance boundaries in November.

Tom Joynt, former superintendent of the Green Bay School District, is co-facilitating the advisory committee with Cole Runge.

Serving as resources for the committee are Joynt; Ben Villarruel, De Pere School District superintendent; Robert Lennon, director of pupil services for the school district; Emmy Mayer, principal at Heritage who will assume the same position at the new school; and Debbie Gagnon, principal at Dickinson.

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De Pere district starts studying boundaries

Advertisement

Third elementary school slated to open in fall of 2007

By Todd McMahon

Gannett Wisconsin Newspapers July 11, 2006

DE PERE — An advisory committee of 22 residents from the De Pere School District convened Monday to begin a planning process for modifying attendance boundaries for the elementary schools.

Many of the committee members have children who attend one of the existing elementary schools, Dickinson and Heritage.

With a third school being built near the town of Rockland and scheduled to open at the start of the 2007-08 school year, the district must adjust the boundaries.

"I know boundaries are emotional ... because they involve changes for children," said Tom Joynt, retired superintendent of the Green Bay school district.

Joynt and Cole Runge, principal planner for the Brown County Planning Commission, are co-chairing the ad hoc committee.

Monday's meeting was for organizational purposes.

The committee plans to meet six times in the next three months before making a recommendation to the school board by early November.

The open meetings will be July 31, Aug. 23, Sept. 13 and 28, and Oct. 11 and 19, all beginning at 6:15 p.m. at the district office, 1700 Chicago St.

After the committee makes its recommendation, the school board will have a public forum before establishing the attendance boundaries in late November.

Superintendent Ben Villarruel has told families that a third of the students and the staff from each of the two elementary schools will be transferred to the new school for its opening.

Georjeanna Wilson-Doenges has a vested interest in how the boundaries will be reconfigured. She has two children who will attend Dickinson next school year and she volunteered to serve on the advisory committee.

"No matter where they go in east De Pere, we have great schools. It's just getting the kids in the transition period because change is hard for everybody — parents and kids alike," Wilson-Doenges said. "So, it's getting us (as a committee) over that hurdle and making sure that we're making decisions for the long run and not to placate people who are complaining now."

The addition of the \$16.3 million school was prompted by a population crunch at the other schools. The district had nearly 1,300 students enrolled in kindergarten through fourth grade last school year and will be at a projected 1,370 in 2007-08.

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De Pere school boundaries awaited

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Decision expected next month on elementary lines

By Dave Norberg

Gannett Wisconsin Newspapers November 22, 2006

DE PERE — The De Pere School Board is expected to decide on a boundaries plan next month for a third elementary school set to open in the 2007-08 school year in Rockland.

The School Board at its meeting Monday night discussed the input received from district residents last week when they saw the three proposals for re-establishing boundaries for the elementary schools.

"I didn't get the feeling there was anybody really passionate about the issue, (just) more curiosity about the three plans," School Board member Sandy Mentzel said.

The majority of concerns were about busing and how long it will take their children to go from home to school.

Public sessions were held in the hallways of Dickinson and Heritage elementary schools on Thursday. The informal meetings coincided with parent-teacher conferences to increase the attendance.

"I think it was a positive turnout. It gave people an opportunity to see (the plans)," district Superintendent Ben Villarruel said. "People had some concerns about logistics, some concerns here and there. Those are things we can address pretty easily."

Villarruel said he feels people are anxious to learn about the new boundaries so they can prepare for the 2007-08 school year.

A 19-member citizens' committee was asked to study the boundaries issue. The group recommended three proposals to the school board last month. Among its recommendations were that the boundaries follow natural barriers such as a river or a freeway and reflect future growth, while neighborhoods are kept intact and special consideration is given to students who already walk to school.

Under all the boundary plans, Dickinson will remain the largest school with an estimated 530 students. Heritage will be next with about 115 fewer students than Dickinson. The enrollment at the new school, which is under construction, will be between 335 and 341. The new school and Heritage have the same square footage. The unnamed school will be two stories high, unlike Heritage and Dickinson.

In April, the administration will know the enrollments in each building and how many teachers to transfer.

De Pere Journal

Posted Dec 21, 2006

Attendance boundaries OK'd in both districts

Staff additions, cuts made on east side

By: Todd McMahon

Neither of De Pere's two school boards had to deliberate long Monday night before finalizing boundary lines for their respective elementary schools.

The boards unanimously approved made by advisory committees of district residents and/or officials for attendance boundaries that will go in effect at the start of the 2007-08 school year.

The Unified School District of De Pere, on the east side, is adding a third elementary school. The School District on West De Pere will have a second elementary school.

The new schools will be open for the 2007-08 school year.

A citizen's committee presented three options for tweaking the existing attendance boundaries for the east-side elementary schools. There were slight variations of the enrollment numbers for the three schools in the three proposals, based on student population for grades K to 4 this school year.

The school board adopted the third proposal, which has a break-down of 39 percent, or 505 students, attending Dickinson; 34 percent, or 442 students, attending Heritage; and 27 percent, or 337 students, attending the new school near the town of Rockland.

The boards finance committee modified the original proposal before it it was brought to the board Monday. Students in two neighborhoods east of the East River were shifted from the attendance area designated for Dickinson to that for Heritage.

"They were looking for natural boundaries. So, those west of the East River and north of Dickinson Road go to Dickinson," Superintendent Ben Villarruel said. "The committee did a good job in laying out the boundaries. It makes sense."

The school board also pushed though a restaffing plan for next school year.

More than 20 full-time positions are to be added, including a director of instruction for

the district, a counselor for the elementary schools and a principal for the new school.

The additions, though, will come at the expense of two assistant principal positions at the existing elementary schools. The savings from eliminating those positions is \$180,000.

A literacy support position at the elementary school level also will be eliminated. Two teachers have been handling those extra duties. The savings is \$78,000.

“(The budget cuts aren’t) in any way to be taken that the jobs that have been in existence weren’t being done well,” school board member Paul Summerside said. “Everybody was doing their job; everybody was doing their job well.:

Meanwhile, the west-side school board will consider the name of its new elementary school.

The board acted on a unanimous recommendation by an advisory committee for the creation of attendance boundaries for the two elementary schools.

Students residing west of U.S. 41 as well as those who reside in a pocket east of 41 and south of Scheuring Road will attend the new school in the town of Lawrence. The projected split for grades K to 5 is 583 students at existing Westwood and 461 students at the new school.

“It made so much sense to see that the boundaries stuck right out,” school board President Barb Van Duerzen said.

A committee of school administrators, staff and students also met Monday for further discussion of the name of the new school. The committee pared a list of several names to two - Hemlock Creek Elementary School and Creekside Elementary School - for the school board to vote on at its Jan. 22 meeting.

A longstanding stream, Hemlock Creek, runs beside the school site.

“Both of them lend a country (setting) that we have there. It identifies the area,” Superintendent Lanny Tibaldo said.

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Semester break will bring big changes for De Pere students

New entrance, rooms opening at high school

By [Patti Zarling](#)

pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com January 18, 2007

DE PERE — Soon De Pere High School students will be unloading backpacks and booting up computers in a new 28,000-square-foot addition to the school.

Included in the new \$3.66 million addition are a variety of expanded classrooms, a large meeting room open to the community, and a new entrance that should make the school more safe, officials say. The addition was approved as part of a \$21 million referendum that also included funding to buy land and build a new elementary school in Rockland.

Included in the ground floor of the high school addition are six language arts classrooms and a large computer lab.

Principal Annette Brace said a new and expanded entryway is meant to increase security. Now all doors to the school will be locked but one, and visitors will have to go through the main office to enter the school.

Additionally, the renovation includes a new, more centrally located elevator, Brace said. Students on crutches or using wheelchairs in the past, had to travel a distance to use the elevator that was part of the old structure.

The second floor has lots of new amenities as well, including a new chemistry and biology lab and two special needs classrooms, Brace said. Those classrooms will be used to teach functional living skills, Brace said, in which special needs students will learn how to live independently after high school.

The new space on the upper floor also holds a large community room, available to the school, the school district and the community, she said. The space also includes an art studio.

Construction is in the final stages, Brace said, and students are expected to move in Jan. 29, or at the start of the new semester, which was the school's target date.

The school was in desperate need of the additional space, Brace said. Teachers have been using office spaces for classrooms.

"We were running out of classroom space," Brace said. "This allows us to accommodate our growing numbers."

And she hopes it will accommodate the exploding student population for awhile.



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Tom Barry of Superior Cabinets of Manitowoc works on a countertop in a new chemistry lab Tuesday at De Pere High School. Evan Siegle/Press-Gazette

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De Pere School District

Current capacity: 3,700

Current enrollment: 3,584

Projected enrollment:

2007-08 3,767

2008-09 3,862

2009-10 3,916

2010-11 4,039

"Our numbers are always growing," she said. "If we follow predictions, we'll eventually grow out of this space."

To alleviate that, the school district also is building a new elementary school in Rockland near Ryan Road and Brown County PP. Students from both Dickinson and Heritage elementary schools in De Pere will transfer to the new school, which is expected to open its doors for the 2007-2008 school year.

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Random drug tests part of proposed code for De Pere schools

Advertisement

School Board hears group's plan for rules of conduct

By [Patti Zarling](#)

pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com March 6, 2007

DE PERE — Random tests for drugs or alcohol and stiffer penalties for attending parties or gatherings where drugs or alcohol are served are among issues addressed in a proposed updated code of conduct for extracurriculars in the De Pere School District.

The School Board on Monday got its first look at a suggested update that would set guidelines for students involved in co-curricular activities.

A group of students, parents, coaches and high school administration has been meeting for months to debate improvements to the school district's code, which hasn't been tidied up in about 20 years.

Officials said the code needs to address modern issues, including performance-enhancing drugs and popular teen Web sites like Facebook or MySpace.

The group started out with 40 members, with about 30 final voting members. The advisory committee began by looking at 15 codes from other districts, members told the School Board on Monday, and eventually chose Kimberly's as a model to follow. Included in Kimberly's code is a clause for random testing for such things as performance-enhancing drugs, drugs or alcohol for students who participate in co-curriculars.

The De Pere School Board directed the advisory committee to consider the potential inclusion of a similar clause in its updated version. Committee members who spoke to the board said they support the concept, though that is something the full School Board should add to the final code.

This code also includes kids involved in extra-curriculars beyond sports, though it does separate competitive activities, such as football or cheerleading, and service-oriented activities, such as the ecology or drama clubs.

Committee members said they struggled with acceptable academic eligibility, eventually settling on a proposed 1.5 grade-point average in the most recently completed quarter. While the committee had discussed a 2.0 GPA, panel member Paul Huibregtse said "we wanted it to be an inclusive code."

The code also addresses conduct violations, which could include possession, use, sale, transfer, distribution or purchase of controlled substances or drugs; purchase, use or sale of tobacco products; hosting, organizing or attending parties where alcohol or drugs are being used; criminal offenses; discrimination or harassment; or representing themselves or others inappropriately or unlawfully on the Internet.

Penalties, consequences, procedures for determining rules violations and rights to appeal are among other

Conduct violations

The code of conduct proposed for the De Pere School District addresses conduct violations, which could include;

- Possession, use, sale, transfer, distribution or purchase of controlled substances or drugs.
- Purchase, use or sale of tobacco products.
- Hosting, organizing or attending parties where alcohol or drugs are being used.
- Criminal offenses.
- Discrimination or harassment.
- Representing oneself or others inappropriately or unlawfully on the Internet.

items included in the proposed code.

The Curriculum and Instruction Committee will take a look at the code in greater detail next month. The full School Board will take a final vote on the document.

School Board members praised the efforts of the committee, while panel representatives said the process went smoothly.

"I think it's important we get something in place," said committee member Nancy VanderKelen.

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De Pere elementary school gets new name

Namesake is longtime educator

By [Patti Zarling](#)

pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com May 27, 2007

DE PERE — The new elementary school in De Pere will have new walls, new desks, new students ... and a new name.

The De Pere School Board on Monday named the new school after Susie C. Altmayer, a longtime educator in the community.

Altmayer was born on May 27, 1898, and graduated from De Pere High School in 1915. She graduated from Oshkosh State Teachers College and began teaching in Ripon in 1917.

She began her career in De Pere in 1922. She became principal of Irwin Elementary School in 1925, according to the school district. She also taught math, reading, social studies and history in the upper grade levels. She retired in 1963.

Upon her death in 1989, Altmayer donated part of her estate to a college scholarship fund for De Pere High School students, according to district documents.

Altmayer's name was among three a committee considered for the new school. Other choices were the Horizon Elementary School or Fox Trail Elementary School. Altmayer's name drew 90 percent of the votes, according to Debra Gagnon, principal of Dickinson Elementary School.

A few former students spoke fondly of Altmayer.

"To do her justice, a school named for Susie Altmayer would focus, as she did, on the process of learning-to-learn and on encouraging a lifelong pursuit of learning," wrote Carol Erbeck Massar, an Irwin School student from 1943 to 1952.

"The emphasis would not be on knowing the right answers; it would be on asking the right questions — and following through from there. Now, how important is that standard in this world of ultra-rapid change?"

"When De Pere was a small district, she had a great impact on all the students in the De Pere system," said Clayton Smits, a member of the naming committee. "If you were to talk to any students my age they would all agree."

The new school is scheduled to open in the 2007-08 school year. The \$16.3 million school is located near Ryan Road and Brown County PP, and eventually could accommodate up to 650 students.

The district also thought ahead. The parcel is big enough to accommodate a future building, possibly a high school, depending on the district's needs.

School superintendent Ben Villarruel praised the choice of Altmayer's name.

"We can take lessons from her life and her dedication to children," he said. "She was an outstanding role

model.

"With the values she had, I think it's appropriate that we educate the public about her, and that we name a school after her."

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New code for De Pere schools goes past drug tests

School officials also address other issues

By [Patti Zarling](#)

pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com May 29, 2007

DE PERE — Although random drug and alcohol tests have received the most media attention, the updated De Pere High School code of conduct for students involved in extra-curriculars actually offers a comprehensive outline for acceptable behavior and academic performance.

School officials said they needed to update the 20-year-old code to also address issues of cell phones and other electronics, as well as computer programs such as MySpace, in which students may post photos of drinking or partying, or may use cyberspace to bully classmates.

The School Board approved the new code by a 6-1 vote last week. School Board officials said the code is meant to show students the district won't stand for illegal drinking or drug use.

Academic eligibility was set at a 1.5 grade-point average in the most recently completed quarter. A committee formed to look at the code said they considered a 2.0 GPA minimum, but wanted to keep activities accessible to kids.

The new code further addresses conduct violations, which include possession, use, sale, transfer, distribution or purchase of controlled substances or drugs; purchase, use or sale of tobacco products; hosting, organizing or attending parties where alcohol or drugs are being used; criminal offenses; discrimination or harassment; or representing themselves or others inappropriately or unlawfully on the Internet.

Penalties, consequences, procedures for determining rules violations and rights to appeal are among other items included in the new code, which will be in place for fall. Consequences will depend on whether or not students are in "group one" activities, which include sports, cheerleading and dance team; or "group two" activities which refers to extra-curriculars not included in the first group. Penalties for group one activities, according to the code, will be suspension from 50 percent of the number of scheduled contests for the first violation or all for the second violation. If the suspension isn't completed before the end of the season, the student will continue to serve the remaining percentage of contests during the next sport in which they participate.

Students in group two activities will complete 40 hours of community or school service before returning to the activity, and will participate in the co-curricular rehabilitation if they have a drug or alcohol violation. A second offense means 80 hours of community or school service.

As for random drug testing, students who want to participate in extra-curriculars and/or have parking privileges would be required to sign a form consenting to the test policy.

Students will be assigned a number at the start of their participation, according to the code, and a few numbers will be randomly selected each week. Those students will be tested on the spot at the school.

Failure to comply with the drug test when a student's number is called will result in a one-year suspension

for co-curricular participants and a one-year loss of parking privileges for those who drive to school.

To test for alcohol use, tickets to dances, proms or other school events will be numbered. The high school principal will randomly select certain ticket numbers before the event. Those students will be given Breathalyzer tests by staff members. The code says about 5 to 10 percent of ticket holders will be tested.

The board and school administrators intend to track the process. Kimberly School District officials have said their random drug and alcohol testing has shown fewer numbers of positive tests over several years.

Several De Pere School Board members, though, cautioned tests shouldn't replace parental involvement.

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De Pere High to require a parking permit for school lot

Privilege will cost students \$60 a year, \$30 a semester

By [Patti Zarling](#)

pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com August 17, 2007

DE PERE — The privilege to park in the De Pere High School lot is going from zero to 60 this year.

That's in zero dollars to \$60 for a permit to park for the year, or \$30 per semester.

Officials say the funds will be used to pay for parking lot maintenance costs. Contrary to some rumors, school administrators say, the funds won't be used to cover the costs of a revised co-curricular code of conduct, which includes a new policy of random drug testing.

"This isn't tied to anything," school Superintendent Ben Villarruel said. "As budgets get tighter, school districts have to take a look at all kinds of things. Other districts have parking fees, it's not that unusual."

For students and parents, it means deciding whether parking is worth the 60 bucks.

"You have to think about if it's really necessary," said parent Kathie Rose of De Pere. She shares a vehicle with her daughter, Kaitlin, who will be junior in fall. Another daughter, Anna, will be a freshman.

Rose said that while kids may have jobs to pay for the parking permit, they're also paying for increased gas prices and fees for other activities. And participating in activities cuts into time for a job, too, she said.

Under the new co-curricular code, students who apply for parking permits may be randomly tested for drug or alcohol use. A positive test would mean losing the parking permit. The same policy is true for kids involved in other co-curriculars.

But the parking permit fee wasn't adopted to cover the cost of a drug-detecting dog, which is owned by the De Pere Police Department, or the actual drug and alcohol tests, Villarruel said.

"I've heard some of those things, and that's simply not the case," he said.

The lot has about 400 stalls and would bring in roughly \$2,400 a year, the superintendent said.

Policies vary in other area school districts.

Both Ashwaubenon and the Green Bay school districts have a \$50 annual parking permit fee. Pulaski High School students pay \$10 per school year or \$5 a semester. And students attending West De Pere High School and Bay Port High School pay nothing.

"We've talked about it as an alternative revenue source," said Bay Port Principal Mike Frieder. "But students might park on streets then, and we're on Lineville Road. We wouldn't want kids to have to walk across a busy highway."

De Pere High School has some residential areas nearby, and Kaitlin Rose parked on a street behind the school last year, Kathie Rose said. But this year they'll think about the permit.

"The bottom line is, if it's really necessary, that's fine," Kathie Rose said. "And other fees, like athletic fees,

are much lower here than in some other districts, so I think it all evens out."

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School budget hearing set for tonight in De Pere

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High school parking permits among expected changes

By [Patti Zarling](#)

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The De Pere School District annual budget hearing is set for 6 p.m. today at the De Pere High School/district office, 1700 Chicago St. The School Board will consider the budget at its 7 p.m. business meeting.

DE PERE — Residents in the De Pere School District can have their say about this year's spending package at the district's annual budget hearing tonight.

Under the proposed 2007/2008 school budget, the total property tax levy would increase about 10 percent to \$16.5 million, up from \$15 million the year before.

The equalized tax rate would jump 1.84 percent, to \$9.92 per thousand dollars of land value, from \$9.74 per thousand for the 2006/2007 school year. That means the owner of a \$100,000 home within the district could expect the school portion of their property tax bill to increase to \$992 from \$974 last year.

The School Board will vote on the proposed spending plan today, but budget and tax levy totals won't be finalized until fall.

Among changes for the 2007/2008 year is implementation of a permit fee for students who park vehicles in the school lot. The price would be \$30 per semester, \$60 per year. School officials expect to collect about \$24,000 from the parking permits for the approximate 400 stalls in the De Pere High School lot.

It's already been adopted, but some parents want to make sure it's needed.

"You have to think about if it's really necessary," parent Kathie Rose of De Pere said last week. She shares a vehicle with her daughter, Kaitlin, who will be a junior in fall. Another daughter, Anna, will be a freshman. "The bottom line is, if it's really necessary, that's fine. And other fees, like athletic fees, are much lower here than in some other districts, so I think it all evens out."

This year, the school district also is opening the new Susie C. Altmayer Elementary School to meet growing student enrollment.

In her introduction, Sue Buchholz, district director of business services, wrote that preliminary budget numbers were developed with the following assumptions:

- A projected enrollment increase of 91 full-time students.
- An 8-percent increase in the district's equalized valuation.
- A 7-percent increase in the state equalization aid of \$1.5 million.
- An increase of 24.5 full-time staffing positions at a cost of about \$986,993.

■ A recurring operational revenue cap override amount of \$600,000, approved in the November 2005 referendum, takes effect in the 2007/2008 budget and will offset additional staffing costs for the new elementary school.

The proposed spending package calls for about an 8-percent increase in general fund expenditures to \$33.8 million from \$31.3 million for the 2006/2007 budget.